Going Online or On-Street?

A Social Network Analysis of the Far-Right Environment in the United Kingdom

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Master's Thesis in Peace and Conflict Studies
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May 2013

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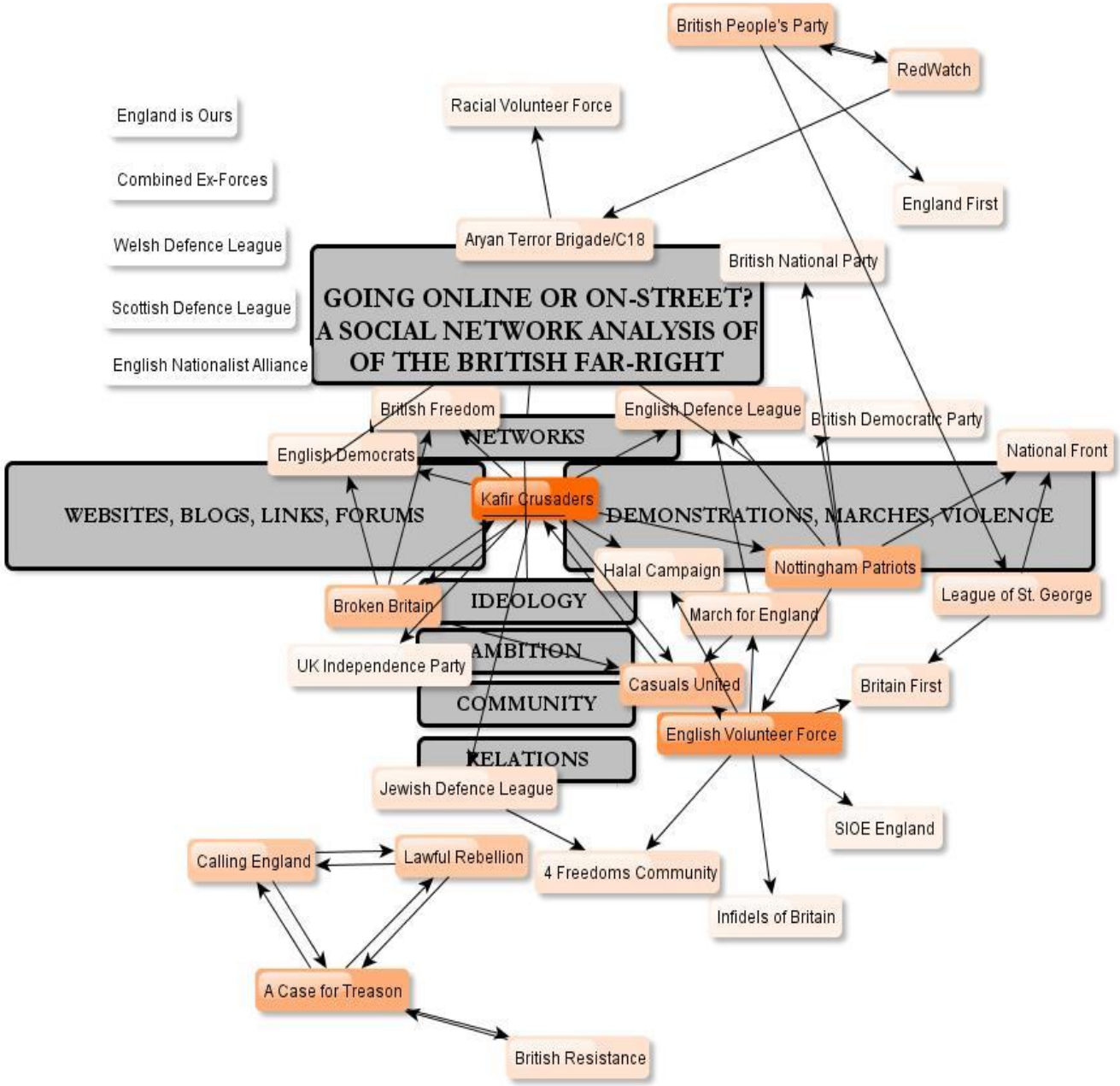

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Printed by: Reprosentralen, University of Oslo

Abstract

A good illustration of the key findings and the questions posed in this thesis can be made through a brief story. In its advent, the ambition of this project was to understand why the far-right – and the anti-Islamic environment in particular – in exactly the United Kingdom was so successful at mobilizing to large-scale demonstrations and causing what seemed like a national havoc. After a period of gathering insight into British far-right radicalism, collecting data, and putting it all in a theoretical context, it was however realized that the question initially posed itself was misleading. The far-right – despite a growing presence online and in the media – was neither successful in the context of organizing on-street demonstrations nor able to form strong alliances in the demonstrations being held. Simultaneously, through the data collection it was observed that that the environment nevertheless was strongly represented in the online sphere.

Thus, this thesis analyses and discusses this apparent discrepancy between what I dub the online and on-street mobilization of the British far-right. This is done through an analysis of the networks which are created online in the form of hyperlinks between the far-right actors. The first key finding is that British far-right groups are connected and engaging in relations online to a much weaker degree than first anticipated. This finding is subsequently analysed and discussed in the light of key attributes and mechanisms known to influence the mobilizing potential of the far-right scene. From this analysis and discussion it is argued that the online sphere may provide strong opportunities for single groups and ideologically oriented actors to mobilize, but that this in itself often prevents the potential for large-scale alliances and mobilization of the environment as a whole. The issues of acting collectively are not overcome on a group level, due to each group's ideological and local orientation. Even more, the online sphere has despite of its influence on on-street mobilization, often become the end stop of the radical journey of new far-right actors. In other words, the British far-right environment fails to become a strong social network online and on-street.

Acknowledgements

To say the least, this thesis has not written nor produced itself. Neither can its completion be attributed solely to me and my efforts. First and foremost, I would in this context very much like to thank my outstanding supervisor, Dag Einar Thorsen. Every session we have shared in the context of the thesis has been an absolute delight, and I have enjoyed every small academic and historic curiosity you have elaborated on, as well as all amusing anecdotes from the department of political science or daily life itself. Still, what I have both enjoyed the most, and benefitted most from has been all your highly valuable input, corrections, and engaged points of view on my text itself, and the broad theme of right-wing radicalism in Europe. It has been truly great to engage in interesting discussions on the topic with someone with such broad and detailed knowledge.

Furthermore, I would very much like to thank the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), especially Nina Græger and Tore Bjørgo for lending me their time, office space, and faith in my abilities – my internship with you was highly inspirational and academically benefitting. Nevertheless, the highlights were engaging with inspirational co-workers- and students. So thank you so much Nora, Maria, Ingvild, Stefan and Simen for sharing a great experience together at NUPI.

I would also like to thank Jacob Ravndal for highly valuable and interesting discussions, for his faith in my abilities on the subject and first and foremost for being a great partner in extremism. I hope you have enjoyed working together as much as I have.

This thesis furthermore marks the end of a five-year spell at the University of Oslo – five years shared with two fantastic co-students – Jonas and Øyvind. Jonas, without your constant will to discuss interesting, political and academic matters, I would never have become as engaged in the social sciences as I have. Øyvind, the same goes for you, but also with the sidenote that I never would have made it through neither my bachelor's nor my master's degree without leaning on your amazing academic abilities.

My good friend Anders also deserves big thanks for pulling me out of my weekend solitudes at Blindern, and feeding me with coffee, BK, football and great conversations and fun in times of despair.

Finally, and most importantly, this thesis would never have been completed, or probably never even started on without the love and support you give me daily, Ingvild. You are not only my one true love, but also my biggest inspiration, my role-model and the one I always ask myself what would have done in any situation. Then I always get the right answer. Even more, you are a fantastic editor, discussion partner, and have helped me more than you may think yourself with this thesis. Thank you – I love you!

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White Nationalism's worst enemy!

Spend most of your time rattling off attacks on other White Nationalists? Then stare into a mirror and see the face of the Enemy of White Nationalism! The Internet is by far the worst offending area. Used correctly and effectively it is White Nationalism's greatest strength. Used negatively it is our worst enemy! […] Websites are proliferating. Our online bulletin 'Nationalist Week' carries its hard hitting message every Monday to thousands of people. The publication of bulletins and magazines is made far more easier by Internet access. Instant communication has many pluses and is moving us forward light years.

(Image and text derived from a post on the website of the right-wing British People's Party/Nationalist Alliance. (bpp.org.uk/worstenemy.html))

1. Introduction

Writing about the proliferation of anti-Semitism in Weimar Germany, Carl von Ossietzky claimed that anti-Semite writers did not need to put in a big effort in mobilizing people for their racist cause. A few fitting words of encouragement would suffice in order to bring the *hands in motion*, he continued (Strømmen 2013). Today, a common argument is that such mechanisms are increasingly relevant, given the "viral spread of extremism online" (Bartlett and Miller 2012:2). In other words – the Internet provides the tools for radicalism to be put in motion.

For most contemporary far-right actors, the online sphere has today become a key arena of opposition to the political status quo. In the United Kingdom it is reported that the far-right environment[1] in recent years has been increasingly active in terms of spreading radical ideas online and engaging in online communication and network-building (Bartlett and Littler 2011, Mulhall 2012, Garland and Treadwell 2010:20). In this regard, the intuitive assumption would be that far-right groups would seek to communicate, cooperate and form alliances as actively as possible in order to be able to mobilize in large numbers on their home streets. Simultaneously, despite several smaller groups' sporadic demonstrations and street-marches, a unified and strong British far-right scene is seemingly not materializing on the streets of Britain. Through a social network analysis of the online links of the British far-right, the question of inquiry which is sought understood in this thesis is:

> ***Given its increasing online activity, why is the British far-right environment relatively weak at mobilizing on-street?***

The two big unknowns I seek to investigate in this thesis are concerned with whether the perception of a viral spread of far-right communication and networking online indeed is accurate, and if so, why it fails to materialize in large-scale, far-right mobilization on British streets. Inversely, if such far-right networks are not identified online, how do we explain this, and even

[1] The concept of *environment* will be used heavily throughout the thesis. It will be defined to simply entail all actors which can be labelled to belong to a (i) British (ii) far-right scene.

more, what does this tell us about the potential for demonstrations, street-marches and organized mobilization of a unified British far-right?

Should the United Kingdom be concerned about a future where the far-right online environment develops into a potent and cohesive collective force in street demonstrations, organized violence and radical, political actions? More dramatically stated, is the country, as Tory MP Enoch Powell famously argued in 1968, heading towards a "river of blood?"[2] Or will the online environment remain as the primary channel of voicing opposition to issues of culture, immigration, race and nation?

Before entering further into the specifics of the thesis however, it seems necessary to elaborate on why the United Kingdom is the nation in the spotlight, and through this illustrate how public apprehension about identity, culture and religion has been articulated in recent years. Like the mentioned Mr. Powell would say: We must enter the river of blood.

1.1 The Puzzle and its Relevance

April 1st 2011: "So clean your flags, iron your tops, and get ready for what could be our biggest demonstration yet!!" (derbypatriot.blogspot.com 2011). This quote is derived from a (now inactive) far-right blog named the Derby Patriots, published on April 1st 2011 in an attempt to recruit and mobilize participants to an anti-Islamic[3] demonstration in the small, industrial city of Blackburn the next day.

April 2nd 2011: The city of Blackburn is home to approximately two thousand protesters, all demanding an end to "Islamization, mass-immigration and multiculturalism." "E-E-E-D-L," is shouted rhythmically in a football match manner, signalling a potent blend of commitment and aggression among the participants. Several violent incidents occur - between police and protesters, protesters and political opponents, and perhaps more surprisingly, amongst the protesters themselves (BBC 2011).[4] This is one of a number of such events in the UK in recent years, headed by a self-proclaimed multi-faith and multi-ethnic organization - the English Defence League (EDL), well-known for organizing demonstrations through various online resources (Bartlett and Littler 2011:14). The described violence among the protesters additionally contributed to a fragmentation within the EDL-movement – in which splinter groups were

[2] Conservative MP Enoch Powell held a famous speech in 1968, arguing that the influx of migrants from former colonies in turn could develop into a "river of blood" due to public protest and communal conflicts.
[3] The term "anti-Islamic" will be used throughout this thesis, rather than the alternative "counter-Jihadist." In brief, this is because the groups themselves claim to only emphasize Jihadist ideology, but my opinion is that such a discrimination between Muslims in general and radical Jihadists rarely is done by the groups in question.
[4] Also signalling that the blogpost was not intended as an April's fool's joke.

formed, seeking to challenge the EDL as the leading mobilizer on the contemporary British far-right scene (Hope not Hate 2012).

Street-based demonstrations and violence from the far-right has for decades been sporadic, but still notable elements of British society, and has in recent years become a more common phenomenon given the emergence of various anti-Islamic groups, with a preference for such forms of mobilization (Busher 2013, Jackson 2011). "Utilising twenty-first century methods of networking, and functioning in a world where Domestic Banning Orders and prohibitive ticket pricing make football a less attractive arena in which to seek physical confrontation, these […] groups have been portrayed in the press as twenty-first century harbingers of far-right extremist politics" (Garland and Treadwell 2010:20).

Nevertheless – dramatic as the Blackburn-event may have been, with several small factions demonstrating under the same banner (Garland and Treadwell 2010), and despite virally active radicals online – far-right mobilization in the form of large-scale demonstrations, protests, and violent events is not reported to be *dramatically* increasing in the contemporary United Kingdom. The EDL – the by far strongest mobilizer to such demonstrations in recent years - is experiencing a lower turnout to its organized events, and as of now no other actors seem to be able to take on a similar role (Mulhall 2012). This however, does not entail that such ambitions are absent. As this thesis will illuminate, the number of far-right groups active in the online sphere is substantial, and several of these have explicit ambitions of mobilizing to large scale protests against what they perceive to be worrying trends in the British society, and perhaps most notably, towards the fallacies of other right-wing groups (Hope not Hate 2012, Mulhall 2012).

The Blackburn-events are additionally important to understand in even broader contexts. The developments of increased public apprehension regarding immigration and Islamic communities are namely not limited to North-West England, or to the UK. Such apprehension is affecting political discourse, behaviour, and in some instances even the functioning of entire communities across Europe.[5] The online sphere is today the most visible, accessible and influential arena for this apprehension to be articulated. New protest groups, radical voices and extreme views are seemingly emerging by the minute online, most with an anti-Islamic make-up.[6]

Still, the British far-right is not a uniform anti-Islamic environment, and the country has a long and troublesome tradition of right-wing mobilization (Thurlow 1998, Thorsen 2012). Historically, the National Front was a highly notable and important far-right actor on British

[5] See for instance Bleich (2011) who discusses the concept of islamophobia in a European context. Eatwell and Goodwin (2011) and Richards (2011) are also relevant contributions on the public and communal apprehension in the face of demographic changes across Europe.

[6] This has contributed to a highly difficult process of gathering empirical data, as new groups often emerge, at the same time as others become defunct.

streets. Even more, the movement sought to unify a fragmented far-right scene under one banner and form strong far-right alliances. Although sporadically successful at this, such a coherent and unified far-right has remained a utopian aspiration for the far-right for decades.

Recent years have in this context brought with them a highly increasing interest in how the online activities of radical groups influence their mobilizing capacities on-street. Caiani et al. (2012:54-55) argue that online communication between radical groups enable them to form stronger networks in the physical sphere, and to achieve increased opportunities of forging coordinated alliances and mobilization. In this light, it therefore seems pertinent to pose the question as to why the British far-right groups continue to struggle against each other, and thus fail to display a strong and cohesive on-street presence.

Furthermore, a large on- and offline environment of more traditional right-wing radicals is still present in the UK. The legacies of the racially oriented National Front endure in various extremist groups. The boundaries between these more traditional forms of right-wing ideas and the new anti-Islamic ideas are often difficult to identify – especially in the online sphere. Online political manifestos, news bulletins and discussion forums belonging to these groups are all heavily laden with both desires of cooperation, hostility and accusations (see Appendix I). Understanding this context is thus of great relevance for understanding the contemporary British far-right.

This thesis will only have its eye on the United Kingdom in its analysis. As will be elaborated on in subsequent chapters, this is firstly because the nature of the research question and the scope of this thesis make the question better answered through a single-country study. Secondly, as already illustrated, the British far-right scene provides a strong empirical basis for answering questions regarding how the online sphere affects the on-street radical sphere. Furthermore, the described events fit well into discussions regarding the Internet's role in contributing to radical thought and behaviour. In popular discourse as well as in academic circles, the Internet's effects on processes of radicalization, on the political climate and on the creation of strong radical environments are becoming increasingly relevant. Such questions have been high on the agenda in relation to Islamist radicalization, but are today, in the aftermath of the 2011 terrorist attacks in Norway, also heavily tied to the violent potential of new far-right movements in Western Europe (see e.g. Goodwin 2012a).

1.2 Finding a Place in the Literature

The social and political relevance of the thesis' puzzle thereby seems to be undisputable. The further step before entering into the project itself is thus to clarify how answering the question above can be of *academic* relevance. What do we know of far-right radical thought and action, and especially in the context of online communication and networks? In order to gain a better understanding of how the question fits into the general field of political and social science, we should briefly look at some academic contributions on matters of radicalism, far-right thought and behaviour and the Internet's effects on such concepts.

Given the label attributed to the groups and movements under study in this thesis as *radical far-right,* a natural starting point is literature on the concept of radicalism. Radicalism as a general concept entails ideas about how society should function which are fundamentally different from those of the reigning political regime (see e.g. della Porta 1995 and Sørensen 2011). Thus, radicalism is traditionally found to be an enterprise of the political margins in opposition to the centre and an enterprise limited to the few. Additionally, radicalism entails something relational – a group cannot be radical if not in opposition to something or someone. This something will often consist of the political status quo, and the someone, its defenders (Bartlett and Miller 2012:2). Tarrow (2011:6) argues that radical politics is formed by and composed of alliances of people in opposition to state elites and authorities.[7] In this view, radical politics is dependent on collectives actively mobilizing for its cause – otherwise this political radicalism will end up as an individual struggle. The socialization occurring in radical movements is therefore important to keep in mind. What separates radical groups from a club of stamp collectors is furthermore the *social* program which is being strived for through collective action. Radical social movements are in della Porta's work operationalized to entail "[…] organized and sustained effort of a collectivity [sic] of interrelated individuals, groups and organizations to promote or to resist social change with the use of public protest activities (1995:3)."

In its basic form, this thesis is concerned with the relationship between radical thought and behaviour. Islamist groups have commonly been under scrutiny in both academic and popular discussions in recent years in this context (e.g. Moskalenko and McCauley 2008, 2009, Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) and Bokhari (2010)). Bokhari (2010) emphasizes the need to understand the ideological context, whereas others focus on individual and structural factors which can be permissive causes of contentious actions (e.g. Bartlett and Miller 2012). Studies of Islamist radicalization can arguably provide us with important tools and theoretical lenses which

[7] There are of course many ways of being radical, but this thesis will emphasize political radicalism, as the far-right groups under study arguably are striving towards political goals.

can be applied for other forms of radicalism and political activism. Also relevant for this thesis will be the works of della Porta (especially 1995, 2009). Her contributions on the dynamics within and between radical left-wing social movements of Italy and Germany provide insight into the organizational factors leading to radical behaviour and action, and will be elaborated on more thoroughly in chapter two.

In the context of radicalism, the perhaps most closely affiliated concept may be *extremism*. The boundaries between these concepts is heavily discussed in both academic and popular discourse, but the most common point of division between them centres on ideas on the use of violence. Extremism is commonly understood to include violence as a legitimate mean in the struggle for radical change (Breton et al. 2002). Extreme actors also explicitly reject democratic politics in their pursuit for radical aims (Sørensen 2012). Still, as this distinction is rather unclear, and there is little doubt that the groups under study fall within the category of being radical, it is radicalism which will be used as the reference point throughout this thesis.

The origins of the British far-right are in addition something which is quite extensively written on. Thurlow (1998) and Thorsen (2012) provide important contextual understandings on the historical roots of the contemporary far-right, whereas Collins (2011) presents a first-hand recollection of his experiences within the environment throughout the 1980s and 90s. Eatwell and Goodwin (2010), Jackson (2011) and Trilling (2012) among several others, have furthermore written importantly on new currents within the British far-right environment – especially emphasizing the anti-Islamic currents.

In this context, academic emphasis on the trends of the radical far-right since the turn of the millennium has centred on explaining the improved electoral results of political parties like the British National Party, the Sweden Democrats, and the Dutch Party for Freedom. Lucassen and Lubbers (2012) and Arzheimer (2009) are valid examples of such research on right-wing parties of the 90s and early 2000s. The findings of these studies have pointed in somewhat differing directions as to what causes support for far-right parties, but have nevertheless contributed to the increasing literature on European far-right radicalism in the new millennium. Arzheimer (2009) for instance argues that the effects of immigration and unemployment rates on far-right radical attitudes vary significantly from country to country.

Statham and Geddes (2006) have in addition found that immigration and culture are increasingly developing into stronger and more important political cleavages in most Western European countries. At the same time, they also find that immigration policies are constructed by autonomous, political elites, leaving few opportunities for the public to affect the outcomes. It is argued that this may influence those critical of liberal immigration policies into becoming even

more aware and angry about their weak opportunities of influencing political outcomes through democratic channels. This point will be of relevance when discussing the potential for mobilization outside of such democratic channels later on. Regarding new forms of far-right ideologies, Kriesi et al. (2006:937) have found that cultural issues linked to immigration, the EU, and globalization, have become much more important and contentious issues for the public in the recent decades, wheras both Lucassen and Lubbers (2012) and Saxton and Benson (2003) argue that anti-immigration ideology is growing into a more serious matter for both European publics and politics.

Going back in time, the 1990s saw an increasing academic interest in explaining the neo-Nazi and neo-fascist movements which were re-gaining foothold in many European states. Several comparative analyses of right-wing violence in Europe in the 1990s and early 2000s were conducted in this context.[8] Additionally, important work has in recent years been done on the ideological traits of radical actors in the UK. Bartlett and Littler (2011) present an important survey of EDL members' ideologies and characteristics, whereas Bartlett and Miller (2012) do the same regarding radical Islamists in the UK and other nations.

A further key factor with obvious implications on the opportunities of mobilization to contentious action is that of state and community legitimacy. The state is by definition the actor which sets the boundaries of which behaviour it will allow to take place on its territory, and if policed strongly, radical action will be difficult to conduct. Conversely, if participating to far-right activities is viewed by a local community as highly illegitimate, mobilizing large numbers of people into action will grow significantly more difficult (see for instance Busher 2013, della Porta 1995, Treadwell 2010).

On the other hand, several studies of the political opportunity structures in which social movements operate have identified strong correlations between state- and movement strategies (della Porta 1995:10-11).[9] In other words, when policing and repression of radical groups has been strict and intense, the strategies of the groups have in turn become even more radicalized. Caiani et al. (2012) also argue strongly that political opportunity structures are highly relevant for gaining better insight into the factors influencing mobilization to far-right action. This thesis however, does not emphasize such structures, as the aim is not to say something about the mobilizing potential of the far-right in itself, but rather this potential in relation to online activity.

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[8] Koopmans (1996) for instance finds that in order to understand the activities of far-right movements, it is as important to understand their internal dynamics, as the social grievances they try to address. Falk and Zweimüller (2011) have emphasized the effects of unemployment on right-wing extremist crime. Engene (2007 and 2011) has furthermore contributed to our knowledge on right-wing terrorism.

[9] See della Porta (1995:10-11) for a review of these studies. They vary somewhat in their definitions and emphasis, but "[…] indicated a correlation between state strategies and movements strategies […]" (Ibid).

Mouffe (2005), among others, describes how state demonization of right-wing radical ideas, may have been counter-productive, in the sense that it has allowed such ideas to symbolize real opposition to actual socio-political issues. These notions are also quite familiar within British far-right discourse today (Busher 2013). By becoming victims of unfair state policing, it is argued that state repression only will make the grievances of the right even more visible, and thereby increase the mobilizing potential of this environment. Della Porta (1995:182-183) has in this context found that Italian and German radicals in several cases became even more committed and extreme in their behaviour after experiencing police and communal repression.

1.2.1 Similar Studies

The most recent addition to the literature on radicalism and action is research conducted on radical groups' *online* networks and communication. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, the increased use of online resources by far-right actors is simultaneously attracting increasing attention and research. The findings of Caiani and Wagemann (2009), Caiani et al. (2012), Köhler (2012) and Zhou et al. (2005) have confirmed that far-right actors today increasingly use the Internet as a multi-purpose tool. Interestingly, Caiani and Wagemann (2009:69) have through a social network analysis of the online links of German and Italian far-right groups found that online hyperlinks [10] can be considered as strong indicators of ideological bonds, common objectives and cooperation between far-right groups, and were through this able to draw inferences about the political landscape in which right-wing actors operate. A key finding is that in Italy and especially in Germany, political parties, and strong social movement organizations are highly central in the online communication networks (Ibid:74-77). Zhou et al. (2005) have through a similar approach identified the how American far-right groups are increasingly using the Internet for ideological proliferation as well as for purposes of offline mobilization.

Köhler (2012) and Caiani et al. (2012) have in this context found that the Internet facilitates communication, and through such communication also integration into radical movements. Furthermore, the online sphere provides anonymity, and thus also a lower threshold for expressing radical views, which again may gain approval from other anonymous actors. Online environments are thereby of importance for radicals who seek to share information and belong to a common culture. In addition, both Köhler (2012) and Caiani et al. (2012:55) emphasize that such information sharing creates a strong potential for ideological discussions and the creation of common identities. In relation to the issue of mobilization, the Internet gives the

[10] An online hyperlink is the function which by the click of a button directs the user to a different HTML-address. This will be explained in greater detail in chapter four.

participants a feeling of a critical mass existing – which (as will be elaborated on in chapter 2) is of great relevance for inducing participation to radical action. Summing up, although no similar studies to this one have been conducted, a vast array of bordering academic contributions on the related subjects is available. This makes the thesis to exist in neither a methodological nor a theoretical vacuum.

1.2.2 My Contribution

In this impressive light of academic contributions, what can a limited master's thesis contribute with? I find that two elements are of relevance. My key empirical contribution is to expand our understanding of how the online networks and communication of British far-right actors with different social characteristics may influence the likelihood of far-right mobilization on British streets. One element is important to underline in this context. Unlike the studies of Caiani et al. (2012) and Caiani and Wagemann (2009) in particular, this analysis includes social attributes of the groups under study such as ideological orientation, local presence and mobilizing ambitions in the analysis. The purpose of this is to gain a better understanding of more than simply the relations between the actors under study, but also about the relations between actors with different social attributes. I find that this contributes much to the understandings of how online networks may influence on-street mobilization, *and* to a better understanding of what may be conducive to creating strong networks online.

One of the key criticisms of social network analysis has been that it is primarily descriptive and only presents us with an empirical description of the relations between certain actors, without any theoretical assumptions about the nature of these relations (Borgatti et al 2009:893-894). Such a criticism could perhaps be salient in relation to the work conducted by Caiani and Wagemann (2009), as their analysis does not presuppose forms of relations, network structure, and primarily derive their inferences from the results produced. The key *methodological* contribution of this thesis is to counter such criticism, and illustrate how social network analysis can be used for testing theoretical assumptions about relations and network structures. Caiani and Wagemann (2009) and Zhou et al. (2005) have paved an important way in illustrating how hyperlink analysis can produce relevant knowledge about the networks of certain political environments. My aim is thus to take this approach one step further through the inclusion of social attributes in order to say something meaningful about how groups with various ideologies, website activity and local presence are interconnected, online and on-street.

1.3 Outline and Key Findings

The thesis' key question of inquiry is concerned with how we can explain the British far-right's failing abilities of mobilizing as a unified front on British streets. In order to achieve this, the online networks of the British far-right are analysed and seen in relation to matters of ideology, local issues and action repertoires as these factors are assumed to be of great relevance for large-scale mobilization.

The second chapter will provide a theoretical and historical background consisting of perspectives commonly used to explain far-right mobilization, and an elaboration on far-right radicalism and mobilization in the United Kingdom. Factors such as general issues of collective action, ideology and relational aspects will be emphasized – forming the basis of the attributes included in the network analysis. Chapter three will build on these perspectives, and make certain theoretical arguments regarding how online activity and networks are assumed to influence the mobilizing potential of far-right actors in the UK. The fourth chapter will elaborate on how these arguments and perspectives actually will be utilized in an empirical analysis. This entails presenting and explaining how social network analysis is appropriate for the thesis' research question. It also entails that I will illustrate how the theoretical arguments are operationalized into measurable and manageable forms.

Chapter five will consist of the analysis itself. This will entail that five models created through social network analysis will be presented and explained. These five models contain information about the online relations between the British far-right groups being studied, and how groups with various attributes are connected. Perhaps the most important finding of this thesis is the surprisingly weak online network of the British far-right environment. Nearly no reciprocal links are identified, and the same goes for strong, central actors with the ability to bring the environment together in a strong network. The weak network is argued to imply a divided, weak and fragmented network, where each individual far-right group, rather than striving for a unified front against the authorities and building strong alliances, are emphasizing mobilization of. The key finding of the thesis is thus that despite increased opportunities of large-scale on-street mobilization is a highly farfetched ideal for the environment to achieve. As the models themselves require interpretations and explanations to be of any relevance, the sixth chapter will discuss the results of this analysis in light of the theoretical arguments made earlier. Chapter seven gives brief concluding remarks, and makes certain recommendations regarding future research.

2. Background

Far-Right Mobilization on British Streets

To remind the reader, this thesis firstly aims to scrutinize whether or not a strong online network of far-right groups exists in the UK, and subsequently discuss the presence or absence of such a network in the context of on-street mobilization. Before entering into elaborations on how to identify online networks, and their possible effects however, the concept of far-right, on-street mobilization must be understood, and it must be illuminated why it is a concept worth analysing. This chapter will provide a theoretical and historical background for the argument that far-right mobilization is a phenomenon which must be understood as a form of collective action which is a consequence of ideological conflicts, local issues and action repertoires of existing groups. It will also be illustrated how there are strong reasons for the argument that the lack of alliance-building and cohesive mobilization of the British far-right environment, are due to the nature in which the individual far-right groups are composed and inducing mobilization. This is a highly relevant point to clarify as the possible effects of the online networks on this environment are strongly influenced by this. This however will be the key point of discussion in the next chapter.

Challenges of obtaining strong and reliable data material, and of analysing direct effects of online networks on on-street mobilization makes a more comprehensive approach to the concept necessary. More specifically, this entails that we must gain a better theoretical and historical understanding of the concept. By not putting on our theoretical lenses, we run the risk of suffering from tunnel vision.

2.1 Defining Far-Right Mobilization

In chapter one, we learned how della Porta has conducted analyses on the public protest activities of radical groups in Germany and Italy. Such activities included demonstrations, violence, street-marches and picketing of oppositional actors' events (della Porta 1995). It will further on be argued that such activities can be understood as the core of the term *far-right mobilization*.

This argument must however have a theoretical and empirical foundation. If they are to be of any academic utility, concepts must namely be discriminating and understandable (della Porta 1995:2, Gerring 1997). This section therefore provides a conceptual specification built on the principles on measurement validity of Adcock and Collier (2001) which entails that the concept of far-right mobilization is defined, and furthermore that it is illustrated how it is sought measured and analysed. Clearly, this is a phenomenon which is heavily laden with room for interpretation, differences of opinions and somewhat unclear data material, and reducing the conceptual ambiguity and bias is therefore an important preparation (Adcock and Collier 2001).

Far-right mobilization is a concept which can take on a vast array of meanings, and based on the arguments of Adcock and Collier (2001:531), we can therefore argue that it can viewed as a background concept in this thesis – laden with different meanings for different contexts and observers. Thus, in order to specify how the concept will be understood and used further on, far-right mobilization must be systematized into an appropriate meaning for the specific context of the contemporary UK.

A quick browse through a dictionary will illustrate how mobilization entails bringing people together, encouraging behaviour, and organizing them once they in fact are brought together.[11] In other words, someone is mobilized, and someone is mobilizing them – with the aim of encouraging them into working collectively for a common cause. A bordering concept is that of collective action, which can be defined as a number of individuals acting together towards the same goals (see for instance Tarrow 2011:16-30) and Collier (1999). When the EDL mobilizes individuals for a street-protest in Blackburn, it has thereby *mobilized* individuals into *collective action*.

Questions of collective action and mobilization are inherent to the social sciences, as they require the creation of social bonds, transcending the simple individual sphere. Mobilization may be short- or long-spanned, well-organized or sporadic results of dramatic events (Tarrow 2011:7). Regardless of this, mobilizing someone entails several severe challenges. The British far-right groups under study in this thesis are actors which to highly varying degrees have overcome these obstacles as individual groups, but which struggle with overcoming them coherently despite their often overlapping goals and ambitions. Caiani and Wagemann (2009) describe the same issues for German and Italian far-right groups.

Given their social and political programs, far-right groups in the UK strive towards making political and social impacts. To a large degree the strategy is to do this through mobilization of individuals outside of electoral politics (Collins 2011, Thorsen 2012, Bartlett and Littler 2011). If we are to analyse the mobilization among British far-right groups, we must in this

[11] As defined in the Oxford Dictionary.

context understand their need to mobilize outside of existing party structures and electoral politics, and rather engage in other forms of public protest activities (della Porta 1995:3).

Firstly, the British electoral system[12] is an obvious obstacle to getting through with radical politics. The radical, political parties included in the analysis are all facing this issue, forcing them to also emphasize engaging in other forms of action. Chapter one also made a reference to a study illustrating how an issue of great concern to the far-right – immigration – is highly difficult to influence through democratic channels (Statham and Geddes 2006). Mobilization of participants to demonstrations and street-marches is in this context a less time- and resource-intensive undertaking than taking the long road of party politics in order to display a radical sentiment (della Porta 1995, Tarrow 2011). Secondly, several of the radical groups under study reject democratic channels as legitimate tools of action, and are more preoccupied in engaging in activities which can be defined as *contentious*.[13] Contentious actions are in the context of radical social movements understood to entail actions viewed as external to formal political processes, and may involve street-based, unlawful demonstrations, picketing of oppositional factions' demonstrations, online and on-street protests, and clear-cut violent behaviour towards political adversaries (della Porta 1995, Tilly 2003, Tarrow 2011). Additionally, British right-wing groups often have other goals than simply political ones – linked to football hooliganism, organized crime, and clear-cut racially motivated hate crime and violence (Eatwell and Goodwin 2010, Garland and Treadwell 2010, Bjørgo 2005). Thus, even though they often have explicit political and social aims, these aims are not necessarily sufficient for mobilizing radical actors into electoral politics.

As will be even further specified in chapter four, far-right, on-street mobilization is thereby defined to entail *active behaviour of far-right groups which does not take place in either electoral or online spheres, but rather activity in demonstrations, protests, marches and organized violence – in other words, organized, contentious action*.

This however creates severe challenges for an academic analysis. Chapter four will highlight how gaining reliable, relevant, and sufficient amounts of data material on such demonstrations, protests and violent events, is a highly complicated matter. Therefore, as hinted on in the introductory chapter, the strategy employed is rather to identify the *mechanisms* which are assumed to influence far-right mobilization. In this way, we may draw meaningful inferences on how online networks influence the mechanisms we have strong reasons to believe are of

[12] Explained very briefly, the first-past-the-post system entails that only one candidate is elected from each community. This favours the larger and more broad-based parties. Still, in certain local elections and elections to the European Parliament, representatives from the British National Party have gained representation and influence.
[13] See the Appendix for a categorization of certain political views of the groups under study.

relevance for determining whether or not far-right mobilization takes place. The following sections provide explanations of why the potential for the British far-right groups and environment as a whole to mobilize participants to demonstrations, protests or violent behaviour is dependent on *collective action, ideology* and *local issues*.

2.2 Far-Right Radicalism in the United Kingdom

In the former chapter we saw what constitutes as *radicalism*. Given the thesis' emphasis on British far-right groups, it is important to specify what is meant by *far-right* radicalism. A rather uncontroversial understanding of radical right ideas and doctrines will emphasize three pillars. Firstly, ideas of inequality and hierarchical relationships are central to far-right actors. People and peoples are inherently different, and in a further extent, of different value (Mammone et al. 2012:5-6). Secondly, these ideas are manifested in an ethnic form of nationalism in which conserving a nation's and people's biological or cultural heritage is the highest of values. Finally, radical means such as violence, extreme rhetoric and rejection of democratic rule of law may be employed in the pursuit of achieving such aims (Mammone et al. 2012:5-6, Caiani et al. 2012:4-6). This thesis has its emphasis on groups associated with respectively the neo-Nazi, nationalistic, and anti-Islamic varieties of far-right ideas. Despite their differences, the three variations can be placed within an understanding of the far-right as specified above. They all emphasize differences between cultures or people which make their coexistence very troublesome. Additionally, all strains of thought are setting these differences in context with ethnicity and their own nation's superiority. Lastly, although only a few of the actors under study explicitly promote violence, most actors view other channels than the democratic one as legitimate for voicing discontent and anger.

The British far-right is today affected by certain societal developments, which as will be illustrated, has affected the dynamics and relations within the environments as whole. Far-right radicalism in the contemporary UK is namely strongly affected by socio-economic turmoil, political polarization and demographic changes in local communities (Eatwell 2006, Eatwell and Goodwin 2010, Collins 2011). New issues related to culture, nation and immigration are increasingly developing into deep-seated political cleavages (Kriesi et al. 2006). A common hypothesis in political science is that economic grievances and relative deprivation are key motivators for opposition outside of the legal channels (Lia 2005, Collier and Hoeffler 2004). In the context of far-right activity in Britain, such a perspective emphasizes that the emergence of new types of, and increased support for far-right movements, can be seen as responses from the

"losers of globalization" (see for instance Kriesi et.al 2006). Historically, the working class in most European countries has challenged the higher levels of society and won important social, political and economic struggles. Feelings may have developed that privileges previously won are being challenged by 'other' communities (Freeman 1986, Andersson 2009).[14] Factors such as immigration and public sector cut-backs are important in this perspective. In England, the EDL and other anti-Islamic groups have gained traction within such a context of EU-scepticism, opposition to immigration and rising economic distress (Eatwell and Goodwin 2010, Garland and Treadwell 2010). Below follows an elaboration on certain key characteristics of the British far-right environment along the axis of ideology, mode of operation and organizational dynamics.

2.2.1 Anti-Islamism, Neo-Nazism, and Hooliganism

The British far-right environment has traditionally consisted of individuals and groups promoting neo-Nazi and neo-fascist sympathies (Thorsen 2012), and also groups with overlapping aims, but which mainly emphasize the Ulster-based nationalistic struggles with Irish Catholics (Edwards 2009).[15] The somewhat overlapping notions of 'Englishness' and 'White English culture' have been central in these contexts. In recent years, the gravity of the far-right has continued to emphasize these notions, but with a different adversary than in the past, namely the Muslim and immigrant population (Bleich 2011, Eatwell and Goodwin 2010, Busher 2013, Allen 2011).

In the encounters with the new social reality presented above, anti-Islamism is the most notable form of far-right ideology on the contemporary far-right scene. The variations within this ideological orientation are significant, but certain similarities can be identified. A key characteristic is the "indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims" (Bleich 2011:1581). Followers of this ideological trend themselves claim to only battle *radical* Islam, hence their preferred label "counter-Jihad." Most observers like Bleich (2011), Bartlett and Littler (2011) and Garland and Treadwell (2010) however find that movements with such a self-proclaimed role rarely discriminate between Islam, Muslims, or radical Islamism, and instead discriminate this pluralistic group in itself.

An interesting point of separation between the neo-Nazi and the anti-Islamic scenes is how the groups belonging to the latter are proclaiming themselves to be vanguards of democracy

[14] Gary Freeman has written influentially about the issues of legitimacy of the welfare state when facing larger numbers of migrants.
[15] See also Collins (2011), Eatwell and Goodwin (2010) or Thorsen (2012) for comprehensive recollections of the history of the British far-right.

and freedom, rather than actively rejecting these concepts.[16] These ideas are highly interesting if compared to the ideas of the more traditional British far-right. They are characterized more by xenophobia, nationalism and conservatism than by racism, Nazism and violence (Busher 2012, Copsey 2011, Bartlett and Littler 2011). Busher (2012, 2013) has through intensive field work within the English Defence League found that the movement takes on a self-proclaimed role in promoting human rights, and acting as vanguards against local crime and instability caused by migrant communities (Busher 2013). This was also experienced during the 2011 London riots (Treadwell 2012).

An explicit point of division between the self-proclaimed democrats of the anti-Islamic movement, and the more authoritarian and racist oriented neo-Nazi and nationalistic groups thus seems to be present in contemporary Britain. Nevertheless, several observers and scholars of radical ideology find that these various movements all can be placed under one large banner of being *far-right,* due to their common emphasis on certain values of culture, conservatism, ethnicity and nation (Mammone 2012:5-6, Eatwell and Goodwin 2010, Thorsen 2012). As will be discussed later on, analysing whether or not ideological or operative cooperation or conflict increases between these movements is relevant when monitoring the mobilizing potential of the British far-right.

As pointed out by Busher (2013) and Garland and Treadwell (2010) these factors, combined with the roots of football hooliganism and the violent legacies of for instance the National Front, are strong contributors to the preferred modes of operation of the contemporary actors of the far-right (see also Collins 2011 and Treadwell 2012). Street-marches, demonstrations and football-styled chanting are among the most prevalent forms of action being seen today, and also being championed by the groups themselves. Even more, a substantial amount of the contemporary British far-right groups have their roots and origins within a hooligan and casual scene, among them the EDL (BBC 2009, Bartlett and Littler 2011:10). Broadly defined hooliganism is a form of mobilization of football supporters engaging in violent relations with opposing supporters. Recent years have seen the formation of unions of such hooligan and casual groups emphasizing the political and social struggles described above, rather than the football scene (Bartlett and Littler 2011:10). Garland and Treadwell (2010:20) note that this is also a result of the very strict regulations and restrictions imposed on these groups in recent years by British authorities battling hooligan violence in football stadiums. Both the EDL and other far-right groups' preferred mode of operations includes street demonstrations against 'Islamist

[16] See for instance the mission statements of groups like the EDL, Stop the Islamization of Europe UK, and more in comparison to those of groups like the National Front, Racial Volunteer Force, etc. URLs are provided in the bibliography, and some key points are extracted and placed on page 3 of this thesis.

terror,' in urban areas of predominantly Muslim and immigrant communities (Eatwell and Goodwin 2010:3-5).[17]

In addition, it can be identified that the online sphere provides various actors with incentives of not engaging in mobilization at all – and rather primarily engage in ideologically oriented work through blogs, alternative news media, etc. This will be a key point of inquiry later on in this thesis.

2.2.2 Fragmentation and Local Concerns

In the fall of 2012 a new report with the intention of revealing the political and social fallacies of the English Defence League was released in the UK. This is not a new phenomenon, as anti-fascist and academics alike have published similar reports since the inception of the movement. The interesting aspect however was that the author of the report was none other than British National Party leader, Nick Griffin (Goodwin 2012b) – commonly referred to by the mentioned activist reports to belong to the same network and environment.

Although a surprising event this may seem to be, the internal fragmentation of the British radical right is one of the key characteristics of the environment (Goodwin 2012b). In online forums, demonstrations and in edited literature, these groups' actions are in a very large degree directed towards each other rather than towards the state.[18] Busher (2012, 2013)[19] highlights the important fact that far-right groups are collectives troubled by a large degree of fluidity and fragmentation. The instability of the organizations are in his accounts founded in the competing pressures within the groups, in which issues of ideology, preferred modes of action, or local orientation are important aspects.

Historically, such a trend is clearly visible already from the development of the National Front, which at several occasions split, re-emerged, changed leadership and altered their alliances. Today, these trends may be even more visible in the context of the anti-Islamic movement. The EDL and its Scottish counterpart the SDL have due to ideological and personal conflicts experienced a clear fallout, whereas several organizations with a rather similar profile to that of the EDL – March for England is one such example – try to distance themselves from the EDL (Bartlett and Littler 2011:11, Copsey 2011:9).[20] Regardless, such a finding may lack validity in two months, given a shift in leadership in either organization, or given new alliances made.

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[17] This strategy is commonly referred to as "March and Grow"
[18] See the Appendix I. Here it is highlighted how a high number of the actors under study in fact are the direct results of splits and conflicts within former organizations and movements.
[19] Dr. Joel Busher has conducted long-term field research within the English Defence League.
[20] See Appendix I for brief descriptions of these various actors.

In chapter one and in the former section, we saw how the British far-right scene has been introduced to new actors in recent years, organizing in new ways, and with new adversaries. Is the environment experiencing a trend of increasing cohesion and stronger potential for mobilization in this light? From its advent in the 1930s, and several decades ahead, the British far-right was primarily an elite phenomenon, directing its attention towards the conservative elites and the wealthy (Thorsen 2012, Thurlow 1998). With sharp-minded and new-thinking individuals like John Tyndall, the National Front (NF), the front-runner of the post-war far-right groups, however gradually shifted its attention towards new groups of marginalized whites (Thurlow 1998, Collins 2011). This increased the mobilizing potential of the environment substantially, as it now was an appealing environment for a much larger, possible constituency of working class individuals in disaffected local communities. Even though the mobilization to groups like the NF has fluctuated largely over the last decades, this trend of seeking to mobilize marginalized, white Brits in conflict-ridden local communities, is still largely present (Collins 2011, Richards 2011, Garland and Treadwell 2010).

Richards (2011) among others[21] argues that the development of several new British right-wing movements should be understood as a community response to experienced social injustice. The English Defence League benefitted strongly from the 2011 riots certain deprived areas in London, whereas the National Front historically has done the same across Britain (see for instance Collins 2011 for a first-hand recollection of being mobilized into the National Front in the 1980s.) In relation to the mobilizing capacity of the British far-right, it is a historical fact that most operatively active groups have had their local setting in focus in both their ideological messages, and their actual activities (see e.g. Collins 2011, Richards 2011).

In the UK, the most notable, new actor on the far-right scene in recent years, the English Defence League, emerged as a result of a local conflict between radical Islamists and the white working-class in Luton on the outskirts of London. This is not a unique event in neither Luton, nor Britain. Bjørgo (2005) argues that the polarization between ideologically competing gangs was an important explanation of radicalized violence in the Norwegian city of Kristiansand in the 1990s – thus not simply their ideological frameworks, or their experienced social grievances. This entails that on-going local conflicts create dynamics which foster further escalation of the conflicts. Bjørgo's views find additional support in research conducted by Eatwell and Goodwin (2010:7-8) and Eatwell (2006) regarding political conflicts in certain British local communities. They argue that a 'cumulative extremism' is affecting local stability in these areas – which to a large degree coincide with those areas previously experiencing support for the NF and other far-

[21] See for instance Eatwell and Goodwin (2010) or Garland and Treadwell (2010) for more insight on this in a British context.

right groups (Ibid). The key argument is that far-right movements and radical Islamist groups engage in dangerous local conflict spirals where the outcome is increased extremism on both sides, and thus a heightened level of conflict.

2.3 Mechanisms of Far-Right Mobilization

So far, general characteristics and a brief background of the broad, far-right environment in the UK have been presented. We saw how certain ideological and organizational traits characterize the environment itself, and more specifically its track record of cooperation and fragmentation.

In a study on the motivations of English Defence League-supporters, close to no significant results were identified as to why some of these supporters take to the streets to demonstrate whereas others do not (Bartlett and Littler 2011:28-32). This thesis has the ambition to analyse why the growing online environment of capable far-right *groups* fails to utilize the opportunities of the web to forge alliances and mobilize in a larger degree on-street. I find that in order to understand this better we must have an understanding of the mechanisms leading to group mobilization, as well as to the mechanisms which affect these groups' interaction once formed. It should in this context be noted that since this is an analysis anchored in political science rather than behavioural-psychology, the perspective will be that of the groups and movements, rather than of the individuals being mobilized. In other words, the perspective is that of the *mobilizers* rather than of the *mobilized*. This section will provide a theoretical foundation on such matters.

2.3.1 Collective Action

One of the more successful attempts of mobilizing in greater numbers in recent years has been achieved by the already described English Defence League. How do movements like the EDL induce a substantial number of individuals into sacrificing time, resources and personal safety through participation in demonstrations and other contentious actions? As sociologist Mayer Zald has argued: "Behaviour entails costs; therefore grievances or deprivation does not automatically or easily translate into social movement activities, especially high-risk social movement activity" (quoted in della Porta 1995:8). In the social sciences, one of the inherent questions has always been that of explaining such collective action.[22]

[22] See Tarrow (2011:16-30) for a good presentation of various perspectives on collective action in the social sciences.

In the further sections, the characteristics of the British far-right environment will be placed within a theoretical framework. This entails that the ideological divisions, local emphasis, fragmented nature and tendency to take to the streets to show their discontent will be put in broader theoretical contexts commonly used to explain collective action, or lack thereof. As illustrated in section 2.1, mobilization is a form of collective action, in the sense that it requires the active participation of several individuals. In this context, theories of collective action provide us with understandings both of how individuals are mobilized, but also of how collectives function once they are formed (Bartlett and Miller 2012:13).

Collier (1999:6-7) recognizes three problems facing actors trying to bring about political change.[23] Achieving political influence is highly dependent on the active participation of many individuals. Collier's first argument is that such influence will be hampered by the fact that every potential active member of the movement will have an interest in *free-riding* – meaning reaping the benefits of what others sow. Secondly, collective action is also severely challenged by the fact that in order to achieve real political change, a movement will need to be sufficiently large to bring about such change. This issue of *coordination* makes it increasingly difficult to create an efficient social movement from the bottom-up, as potential members will be more tempted to join existing and larger collectives (Collier 1999:6). Thirdly, the potential participants need to be assured that their hard-work actually will accomplish their political aims. This *time-consistency problem* is together with *free-riding* and *coordination* three fundamental issues facing all attempts of collective action.

2.3.2 Group Mobilization

It seems undeniable that the issues described above are present for any form of attempt of mobilization. Why join a marginal group which cannot provide you with any guarantees of rewards for your hard work? Nevertheless, mobilization takes place – and even for radical far-right purposes. This thesis' empirical basis alone consists of more than thirty far-right collectives located in the UK.[24] In these cases, the benefits of struggling for a common, far-right cause clearly outweigh the costs – even if these costs, like Zald argued above, are significant. In this context, the concept of *radicalism* as discussed above is highly central.

Collier (1999:7) argues that the issues of acting collectively can be overcome through the construction of commitment within a group, but primarily through incentives of material rewards

[23] Collier mainly discusses collective action in the form of violent rebellion in civil war. Nevertheless, I find that his general arguments regarding collective action are relevant for discussions about other forms of contentious political action.
[24] See Appendix I for a complete overview of the groups under study.

from actual participation, not merely from the spoils won later on. Far-right groups in the UK have historically had weak prospects of providing material rewards for their members,[25] and have thus had to rely on ideological commitment as their primary mobilizing mechanism. Caiaini et al. (2012:13-14) describe such ideologies as "[t]he dominant world views that guide the behaviour of social movement groups." In other words, the key ideas of a group guide how this group will behave and operate. Thus, if we are to say something meaningful about the likelihood of certain British groups engaging in on-street behaviour, we must understand their dominant world views. For this reason, taking into account the radical, ideological views of the various groups under study is important.

Still, questions how ideologies affect the likelihood of action are not easily answered. As Lia (2005:159) argues: "[…] It is very hard to make reliable predictions about something as intangible and fluid as extremist ideologies." In this context, questions about whether on-street mobilization constitutes something qualitatively different from other forms of political activism (Moskalenko and McCauley 2009:240). In the latter case, it is among many analysts of radicalization argued that radical activity in itself is motivated more by passion and need for meaning, than rational cost-benefit evaluations or ideological persuasion (see for instance Griffin 2012, Bartlett and Miller 2012).

On the other hand, Moskalenko and McCauley (2009:257) argue that the physical actions of radical actors must be seen as the "[…] apex of a pyramid of sympathizers and supporters." This will entail that the groups or individuals actually being mobilized are the most ideologically committed and capable actors. A key finding in this context derived from the literature on Islamist radicalism is that the ideological persuasions and competence among key members of the radical collective strongly contributes to keeping such networks together and active.[26] A focal point of debate, regards how this process affects the likelihood of collective *action* rather than only shaping collective *ideas*. Do street-level activities represent natural continuations or something entirely new in the process of radicalization? Both Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) and Bartlett and Miller (2012) have criticized such a "conveyor-belt approach." Through comparative studies of radicalized individuals their findings indicate that ideological persuasions as well as social grievances by themselves are insufficient as explanations of radical action. The findings of these studies thereby imply that the leap from political protest to physical actions is much more profound than conventional wisdom would have us believe. Applied to far-right

[25] This is of course a picture painted with a very thick brush. Certain far-right groups have been linked to organized crime, obviously cumulating revenue and material rewards for key participants.
[26] See e.g. Lia (2005) or Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) for contributions on motivations for Islamist terrorism.

groups, this entails that online radicalism on a group's webpage does not necessarily materialize into actual mobilization in the physical sphere.

If these steps are not merely dependent on ideological persuasion, how are they then reached? In their analysis of radical Islamists, Bartlett and Miller (2012:13-16) have found that factors such as the need for thrill and adventure, peer pressure and strong emotional ties to key members, may be as important as pure ideological motivations or personal grievances in creating collective, radical action. Reduced local status, free-riding and not participating to collective action may often entail higher costs than actual participation (Bartlett and Miller 2012:14-16, Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). These studies also find support in a British policy report dealing with mobilization to far-right movements (Goodwin 2013). These findings indicate that clear-cut ideological radicalization may be an insufficient explanation of participation in radical movements' activities. Combined with ideological persuasion, other factors seem to be required.

The influential civil war researcher, Stathis Kalyvas has in several studies (e.g. 2003, 2006) found that local motivations bear with them much more explanatory power than national ones in studies of civil war participation. Countering the role of a 'master cleavage' rooted in a national ideology as causes of mobilization, he finds that the micro-level conflicts between rivalling communities or even neighbourhoods, can explain a great proportion of which side of a conflict someone will support (Kalyvas 2003, 2006). In this light, it arguably seems substantially more likely that far-right groups struggling with large-scale mobilization should be much more engaged in their respective communal conflicts than seeking to engage in broad-based, national alliances.

As noted above, British far-right groups are often able to forcefully express local communities' grievances through demonstrations or through the performance of services not managed by governing bodies (Treadwell 2012, Richards 2011). In this context it is also important to bear in mind that far-right movements often diverge from textbook definitions. Instead of being well organized, with a dense and institutionalized structure, they have traditionally been characterised by having a low degree of cohesion and organizational abilities (Europol 2011). As a result of this, British far-right groups have often been forced to be more locally oriented than other forms of social movements. This local orientation may however bring with it the opportunities for closer and denser relations among smaller groups and individuals.

2.3.3 Forging Alliances On-Street

Thus, despite several difficulties, we can see that mobilization to far-right organizations and groups is possible, and is occurring in the UK. In this light, why are these actors often weak at forging strong networks and acting cohesively under the same banner? Again, the obstacles of

collective action should be scrutinized. If we view the individual groups themselves as the actors which need to be induced into acting collectively, issues of coordination, free-riding and time-consistency again become relevant.

Regarding coordination, a highly relevant question concerns whether or not the broad far-right environment in the UK is riding the same ideological conveyor-belt. Are they in other words adhering to the same world views which ultimately guide their behaviour? If this is accurate, then the potential for mobilization should be assumed to be stronger, given the larger pool of potential participants, and the existence of a broad network of groups with the same goals. If however such a network is present, then mechanisms of free-riding in the form of groups reluctant to join in due to the perception that other groups will act for them may be present (Collier 1999). Still, as indicated above, the British far-right is an environment in which both ideological and local divisions are strongly represented. Historically and today this has materialized in a heavily fragmented environment, rather than one experiencing coordinated, and cohesive alliances. Especially the more marginal and local issues, as highlighted above, make the issue of free-riding into a smaller one as most far-right groups are mobilized on such rather narrow interests.

Radical movements are often composed of several different smaller groups and highly complex leadership structures. "The result is a loosely organized collective conflict, in which hundreds of groups and organizations episodically take part in many different kinds of local collective action" (della Porta 1995:11-12).Thus, the case can be made that the mechanisms conducive to group mobilization, often may be impeding on the larger alliance constructions. Regardless, as all these ideological and local currents can be labelled as being far-right there are more points of agreement than of division. The interaction between these factions is therefore something which must be scrutinized and analysed – which will be done in the subsequent analysis and discussion.

A further way of creating a stronger network from a broader environment may be through playing on each others' comparative advantages. Della Porta (1995:51-52) has found that Italian and German left-wing movements of the 1970s to a large degree were divided into certain factions which were oriented towards actual mobilization to demonstrations, violence and political protest, whereas other factions primarily emphasized ideological proliferation and propaganda. This finding is very interesting, in the context of how radical groups operate. Some are seemingly mainly preoccupied with on-street activities, such as demonstrations, and in the furthest extent, violence. Others are however directing their attention towards ideological proliferation – and thus require more than basic insight into the ideas they fight for. Despite

being divided however, della Porta emphasizes how these two forms of radical action are highly dependent on each other, and are necessary components if a politically oriented environment is to maximize its potential and achieve their ideological aims. Thus, the ambitions and capacities for on-street mobilization *and* ideological mobilization of British far-right groups is something which must be taken into account when analysing the mechanisms of mobilization. In other words – whether or not are they riding the same ideological conveyor-belt, and experiencing increased opportunities for large-scale mobilization through this.

"Based on past periods of conflict with a particular group(s) or the government, individuals construct a prototype of a protest or riot that describes what to do in particular circumstances as well as explaining a rationale for this action" (Hill and Rothschild [1992:192] in Tarrow 2011:30). In other words – radical movements are (paradoxically) quite conservative in their protesting strategies. Charles Tilly labels such strategies as *repertoires of contention,* and concurs with Hill and Rothschild, by emphasizing that such repertoires guide the actions of social movements (Tilly 2003:46). Understanding their action repertoire is thus relevant in trying to make predictions about future behaviour, and in this context, mobilization to on-street action.

2.4 The Mobilizing Potential of the British Far-Right

Several perspectives on the constraints and opportunities of far-right mobilization have so far been presented. Such mobilization is a very difficult undertaking both in the context of mobilization to individual British far-right groups, but even more to the mobilization of an entire environment. Common obstacles of collective action must be overcome if far-right groups are to achieve mobilization. Historically, this has entailed that far-right groups in the UK have struggled to gather strong support for both ideas and action. Voicing a strong apprehension or resistance to mainstream politics meant sticking your head out and paying the price of being a publically known radical. Groups like the National Front and the British National Party faced severe challenges of inducing participants into radical activity on the streets of Britain. In an environment in which radical behaviour entails severe costs, it seems very difficult to foster strong mobilization. In addition, groups with seemingly overlapping aims are often more in conflict with each other, than focusing on accomplishing their goals.

Through this chapter we have seen how ideological and local concerns may be conducive in this context, creating meaning and reason for participation to contentious action. Nevertheless, we have also seen how the British far-right environment is strongly fragmented, and that a network of interconnected groups seems to be a farfetched ideal today – especially due to these

same mechanisms conducive to group mobilization. A theoretical argument on deep-seated action repertoires may however nuance the image somewhat. The case can be made that due to the differences in preferred modes of operation within radical environments, various groups and actors will have interests in playing on each other's strengths. In the context of the British far-right, this entails actors which primarily emphasize ideological proliferation, and groups with a preference for street-based mobilization.

The next chapter will elaborate on how the increased online activity of these actors is assumed to influence the mechanisms described in this chapter. Voicing radical views may today both find cover in the anonymity provided by the Internet, as well as finding likeminded individuals and groups. In other words: Online activity may release the potential for cohesive on-street mobilization.

3. Arguments and Assumptions

From Online to On-Street Mobilization?

"The Internet is not only used by these types of groups to spread propaganda, boost the use of violence, and facilitate recruitment of new members […] but also to find and maintain contacts with other extremist groups […] thus forming dense networks of organizations that can potentially sustain mobilizations and facilitate the construction of collective identity" (Caiani et al. 2012:54).

The preceding chapter has illustrated the opportunities and constraints facing British far-right actors in their attempts of achieving participation to street-based demonstrations, protests, picketing and violent activities. It has been argued that certain characteristics of the British far-right environment are of great influence on such attempts - primarily ideological divisions, the strong preference for on-street mobilization, a high degree of fragmentation, and certain groups' strong local emphasis. These characteristics are, as we saw, also recognizable in common theoretical contributions on the mechanisms of far-right mobilization. Even more, the case was made that these mechanisms may be conducive to the creation and mobilization to single-groups, but often prevents large-scale mobilization of several groups.

The quote of Caiani et al. (2012) referred to above, is highly interesting in this context. Their argument is that not only is the Internet important for the activities of single groups, but also for bringing such groups closer together. This chapter will scrutinize these assumptions about the Internet's role in the activities of radical group's activities. To remind the reader, the aim of the thesis is firstly to identify whether or not the perception of a strong far-right, online network is accurate, and subsequently to discuss the findings of such an analysis in relation to the mobilizing potential of the British far-right. Therefore, if we are to identify an online network, a definition of the concept must be provided. This is done in the chapter's first section. Thereafter it will be argued that the Internet may be highly conducive in bringing about group mobilization, but that its effects on large-scale alliances being made are more uncertain. This chapter will thus

elaborate on the theoretical arguments for assuming that online networks, communication and activity will have an impact on far-right mobilization. Chapter four will in turn build on this chapter and elaborate even further on the specifics of how these arguments are to be tested and analysed.

3.1 Acting Collectively Online

In the former chapter, we saw how acting collectively is a highly difficult undertaking for any radical actor. In this context, the Internet is not exclusively something in which users can find information and entertainment. On the contrary it is also a *tool* for those who wish to spread information, *communicate*, and *mobilize individuals*. Bermingham et al. (2009:232) argue that "[…] the Internet is not neatly divided in two with information provision (i.e. passive websites) on the one side, and interactivity (i.e. forums, chat rooms, etc.) on the other."

Rather, most Internet sites available for radical actors combine these two attributes, making them both providers of information and arenas of interactivity. In this context, several recent studies have found that the Internet provides radical groups with new opportunities of spreading their ideas and recruiting new members (Della Porta and Mosca 2009, Köhler 2012). Even more important for this thesis is the argument that the Internet may provide such groups with increased opportunities of communicating with each other, and form social networks online (Caiani et al. 2012:55) – in other words, acting collectively online. As opposed to on-street collective action, in the online sphere radical actors acting together can be located in highly different geographical spaces. Online networks therefore entail that individuals interact and engage on the same spaces online – and engage in online collective action (Caiani and Wagemann 2009).

The task of defining what constitutes as online networks is however challenging. To start with the very basic, such networks exist within an online *environment*. Such environments are arenas on the Internet in which users can connect with each other, share and gather information, and thus be part of creating and developing the environment itself (see for instance Zhou et al. 2005:44-45). As mentioned in chapter one, the full spectrum of British far-right groups is understood to be an environment. Thus, the British far-right online environment entails the full spectrum of far-right groups engaged in such online arenas. A network may then be formed when several websites are inter-connected, in the sense that the same users engage on all these sites. More specifically, networks are present when actors within a common radical environment are sufficiently inter-connected through extensive and dense linkages. A valid indicator of such

networks being in place is as argued by Caiani and Wagemann (2009) and Zhou et al. (2005), online hyperlinks. Such links will be elaborated on and defined in later sections.

3.2 Forming Networks

Thus, the concept of online mobilization is understood to entail forming *networks* in the *online* sphere – both between individuals, but in this context, primarily between websites and groups. Caiani et al. (2012:54-55) argue in this context that radical actors use the Internet in order to achieve communication and form networks with other similar radical organizations. Online networks are understood as a strong indicator of *communication* between those involved. As we learned in the previous chapter however, the fact that someone are communicating does not necessarily entail that they are cooperating or engaged in friendly collective action. The inclusion of social attributes in the forthcoming analysis, aids us in understanding the nature of the relations formed, and also the absence of relations.

Despite the difficulties of evaluating the meaning behind an online link, Caiani and Wagemann (2009:69) argue that much can be learned from studies of such relations: "Nevertheless, we can be sure that this kind of study can shed light on an area of virtual activity and of social exchange between right-wing groups which use the Internet as an additional channel in order to construct their common identity."

Based on this account, radical groups still consider physical mobilization to be relevant and not replaced by the new possibilities of proliferating ideology online. This is also in sync with the findings of a study conducted by Pilny and Shumate (2012), who have found that the online hyperlinks of non-governmental organizations can be understood as extensions of offline collective action. In chapter two, we saw how the mobilizing potential of the British far-right is determined by various social mechanisms. This section will illustrate how online mobilization may influence these mechanisms by taking on the same approach as the former chapter. Firstly, how group mobilization may be affected by online networks will be elaborated on, before the issues of forming dense networks and strong alliances are scrutinized in an online context.

3.2.1 Group Mobilization Online

How may the mechanisms of group mobilization be affected by the growing far-right activity online? An analysis of the online networks of American extreme right groups found that these groups increasingly use the Internet in order to recruit new members, reach wider audiences, spread political ideas, and link up with other like-minded groups (Zhou et al. 2005:44). The

assumption that radical actors make use of the online sphere is still seemingly both relevant and valid. The further question is however, how this trend affects the activities of such actors outside of the online sphere, and more specifically in their aims of mobilization. Even though the Internet provides its users with spaces for ideological proliferation and interaction, the events in Blackburn highlight how far-right actors are using the web for purposes of mobilization.

In chapter one of this thesis, the findings of an influential study on the Internet's effects on radicalization processes were briefly presented. These findings are of great relevance in this context. Through in-depth interviews with former extremists, Köhler (2012) found that the Internet was a crucial factor in their individual processes of radicalization and integration into radical movements. Firstly, Köhler (2012) found that the Internet facilitates communication, which often may lead to that individuals are included into an existing movement. Furthermore, he found that anonymity lowers the threshold of participation, which enables the sharing of information and feelings of belonging to a culture. Secondly, the vast opportunities of ideological discussions often led to the actors becoming increasingly ideologically radical, which, as we have seen above, may affect the likelihood of action.

Köhler (2012) notes that the Internet, through the large scale presence of radical material and websites, encourages and convinces individuals that a critical mass of like-minded radical individuals also is present. In other words, the online environment provides strong opportunities for individuals to belong to something greater than themselves. Bartlett and Miller (2011) and Griffin (2012) are proponents of arguments which view such mechanisms as more important more mobilization to radical activity than clear-cut ideological issues. The described issue of coordination may in this context easier be overcome, as the interactions and contacts between radical individuals are improved in the online sphere.

A common argument in contemporary debates on the role of the Internet in the political landscape is that the online sphere provides far-right actors with an "echo-chamber" in which their radical views are repeated, intensified and pave the way for radical actions. Even if this is rejected as being a too deterministic assumption, the Internet is a highly valuable resource for any radical actor. Websites, social media, electronic communications and ideological blogs are important in spreading a radical message, and thus potentially in recruiting new members to radical groups (Whine 2012:322-323).

In chapter two we also saw how local issues and communal conflicts commonly function as strong mechanisms of demonstrations or street-based protests. Given the Internet's role as a facilitator of communication and coordination, the organizing and coordination of organizations to more localities should increase. The English Defence League is for instance an organization

with a vast array of local divisions, and the same goes for other groups like Casuals United, the National Front and the Infidels.[27] It was also argued that with more radical ideology being proliferated to more possible sympathizers, the more likely it will be that the potential for radical mobilization increases. The online sphere is arguably an extremely important breeding ground in this context. Traditionally, radicalism has been an activity taking place in either edited literature, or in the physical sphere through demonstrations, political participation or violence. Online forums, social media and advocacy blogs have proliferated greatly in recent years (della Porta and Mosca 2009). If there is one thing the Internet is highly capable of contributing to, it is to spread ideas at a much higher rate, and to a greater audience than in the past. British far-right groups were traditionally more locally based, not openly discussing ideological issues, and even more than today, sceptical of other, similar groups (Collins 2011). The online developments have arguably altered this in several ways. Ideological issues are being discussed in the forums of each group's website. Protests and activities in one locality are being discussed nationwide. "Because terrorists are few in relation to all those who share their beliefs and feelings, the terrorists may be thought of as the apex of a pyramid," McCauley and Moskalenko (2008:417) write in an article on radicalization processes. Today, it might be pertinent to argue that this pyramid to a large degree is existent in the online sphere.[28]

Summing up, the conclusion of this section must be that there are strong theoretical arguments for why the increased online activity of British far-right actors can contribute to the formation and mobilization of more such groups.

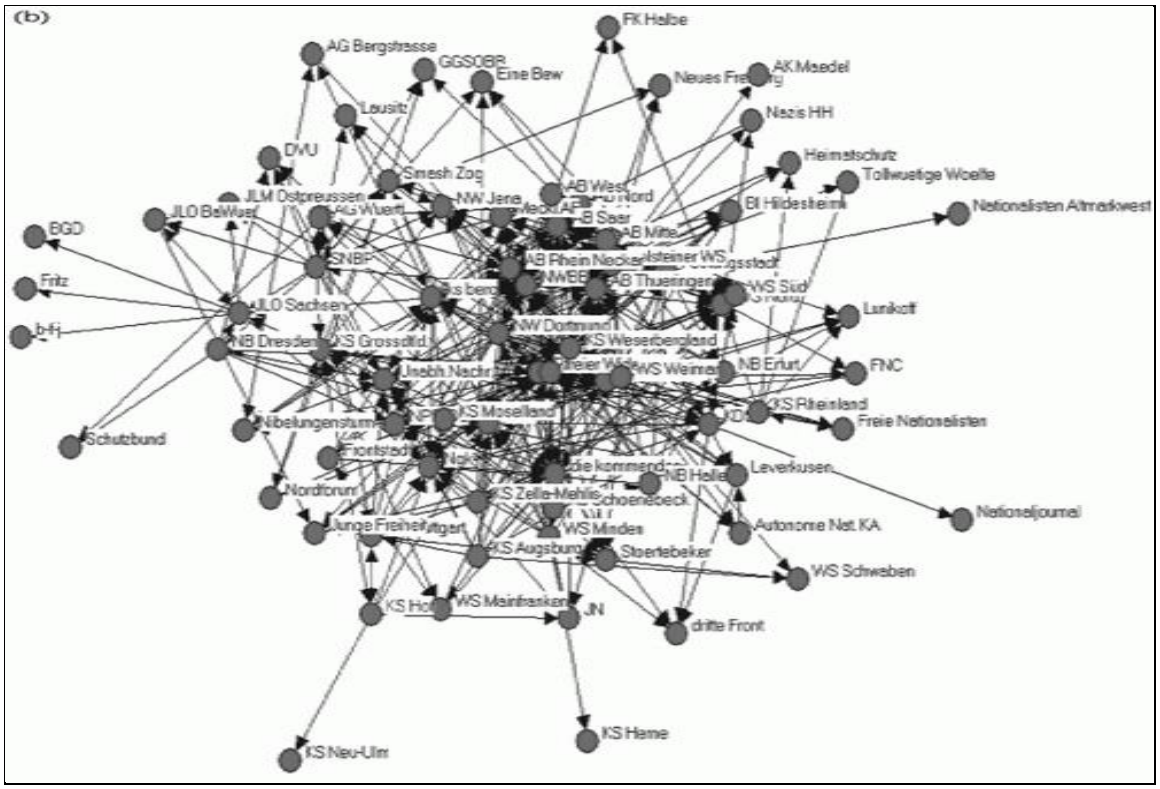
3.2.2 Forging Alliances Online

Caiani et al. (2012:55) argue that previous research has found that online networks between radical groups may contribute strongly to the constructions of common identities, and denser relations within a radical environment. Still, in the former chapter, it was argued that exactly such proliferation of groups may prevent the prospects of alliances and dense, cohesive far-right networks in the UK. We saw how the far-right environment is fragmented, and often more in conflict internally than with political opposition or authorities. This has historically as well as today weakened this environment's chances of forming strong alliances and thus also its cohesive mobilizing potential. Thus, the issues of collective action are to some extent resolved on a group level, but are highly present for the far-right environment itself. Important indicators of whether

[27] See Appendix I.
[28] Bennett and Segerberg (2011), Bermingham et al. (2009), Zhou et al. (2005) all present arguments which imply that the online sphere displays the full range of radical ideas and views.

or not networks are present can be identified through measures of density, cohesiveness and inter-linkages in the online relations of the groups.

Below follows a copy of one of the models produced by the analysis of Caiani et al (2012:64) of the online networks of the German far-right.[29] The reason for including this illustration is not to say something specific about this environment, or about certain groups within it, but rather to illustrate how radical networks are composed of internal cooperation, divisions, and certain actors that possess central roles. This is very important to keep in mind when conducting an analysis of a social network, and as discussed in chapter two, especially so in analyses of the conflict-ridden far-right environments of the UK. A general assumption for the further analysis is that such mechanisms of sub-groups, divisions, and certain strong, central actors will be present also in the British case. Especially, given the attention granted to a group like the English Defence League in recent years, this movement's centrality (or lack of) in the online network will of great interest when trying to understand the mechanisms of British far-right mobilization.



[29] A good example of how an online network of hyperlinks can be visualized. This model illustrates the online network of the German far-right and is derived from Caiani et al. (2012:64). Group names might regrettably not readable in this copied version, but this is not important for its use in this thesis. The aim is simply to illustrate how a social network of given actors may be visualized.

The model above illustrates quite well that the number of groups active online, and their high degree of linkages may give possible participants to radical action in Germany a feeling of belonging to a complex and important collective. It additionally illustrates a rather dense network, with a high degree of centralization (Caiani et al. 2012:64-65). Dense networks are characterized by a large degree of inter-connection and interaction between several actors in the network, whereas centralization entails that certain actors – for instance the political party, NPD – enjoys a high amount of links and relations with other actors in the network.

As will be emphasized even more in chapter four however, my analysis will take this analysis one step further, and illustrate how groups with various social attributes are connected in the British network. By doing this, the picture is literally a different one. Increased interaction online may have a strong impact on the relations both within and between far-right groups. This may entail a stronger connectedness within groups, and even integration between kin-movements, but also stronger conflicts within the general environment, as the division points become more visible.

If there is one attribute of the Internet which has become something of a cliché, it is that it makes the world smaller. Right-wingers in Newcastle may today be communicating with likeminded living in Portsmouth or even in Helsinki for that matter. How does this influence the common reflexes of mobilizing locally? Local issues, it was argued above, is often an important factor in understanding how political grievances create radical action. In the modern era however, new spatial contexts have emerged, creating new spaces for interaction and mobilization. Analysts of the German security services have for instance argued that the Internet has become the most important mode of communication for right-wingers (Whine 2012:322). The Internet in addition functions as a platform for groups which often form collaborative networks in which both online, and on-street activities are coordinated and planned (Ibid). Based on these accounts arguments can be made that the online sphere might make local issues of less relevance, as all aspiring radical actors will have much stronger opportunities of getting their message across to a national, rather than simply a local audience than before. One possible hypothesis to make from this is that nationally oriented groups function as the strongest and best connected groups online. Given the new possibilities of communication, they could be expected to have a weak local presence, and instead emphasize connections with similarly large and nationally oriented groups online.

In chapter two we learned how della Porta (1995) emphasizes how radical environments commonly are divided between ideologically active actors on the one hand, and primarily operatively active actors on the other. This assumption alone would give us reason to believe that

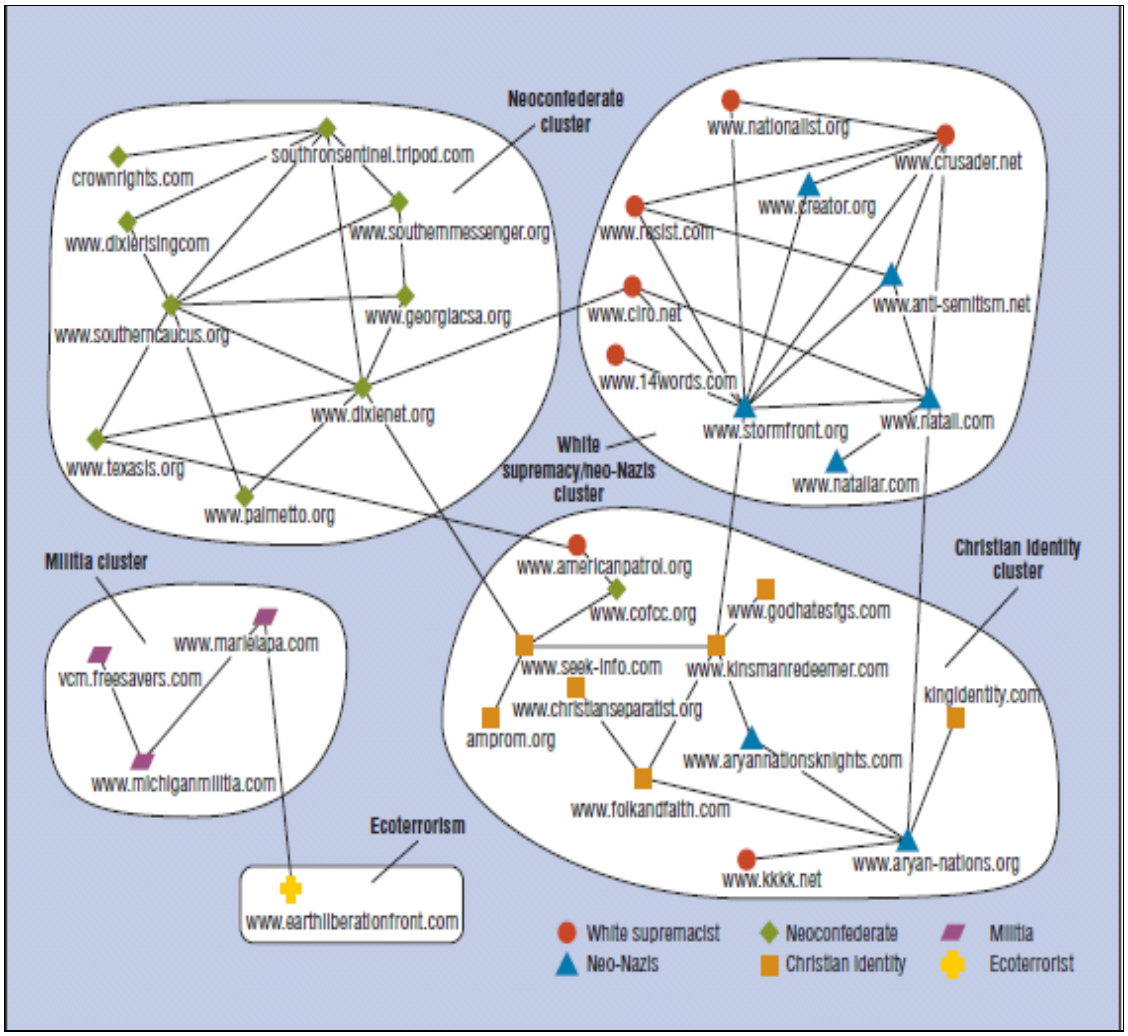
the larger the number of ideologically oriented websites present among the actors under study, the smaller the mobilizing potential of the far-right is. The second assumption is however that through ideological interaction and proliferation, groups and individuals are exposed to new impulses and may experience processes of radicalization in which they become more likely to engage in operative, contentious action.[30] On the other hand, it may be argued that stronger ideological commitment coupled with a greater degree of legitimacy of radical behaviour increases mobilizing potential of radical groups.

Nevertheless, as interaction and connectedness between likeminded increases, so do the chances of interaction between competing actors. Caiani and Wagemann (2009) have in their analysis of the German and Italian far-right environments found that in both environments there exist strong cliques and sub-environments in conflict with each other. In the analysis of Zhou et al. (2005) both strong divisions, but also overlapping relations between various sub-groups are furthermore identified.[31] This is illustrated in the model below, derived from this article. From this model, we can for instance identify how the clique of right-wing militias is completely isolated from the remaining far-right environment, whereas certain links exist between the neo-Nazi- and Christian identity clusters. The identification of such patterns, and sub-networks will be of great relevance when analysing the potential for the British far-right to mobilize in a cohesive and strong manner.

Summing up, the picture painted by Caiani et al. (2012:55) regarding the Internet's ability to bring radical movements closer together both online and on-street may require some additional nuances. I find that we may interpret the model derived from Zhou et al. (2005:49) in several quite different ways. Firstly, the model clearly illustrates that the Internet has not transcended most ideological divisions between certain categories of right-wingers in the US. On the other hand, the model also illustrates several links between several actors belonging to different sub-groups. Even more, the online links within these sub-groups are very substantial, illustrating that the online sphere may provide actors of similar ideological orientation to indeed It has been shown that the "[…] *Internet can have an impact in facilitating the exchange of resources and information, thus creating solidarity and facilitating the sharing of goals and objectives*" (Caiani et al. 2012:55).

[30] See for instance Enebakk (2012) who through an analysis of far-right ideologue Fjordman's process of radicalization argues that the level of ideological sophistication displayed in Fjordman's texts has strongly influenced the general far-right environment.

[31] A link analysis model of the web community of American far-right groups. The model is derived from Zhou et al. (2005:49).



Zhou et al. (2005:49). This model illustrates both deep-seated cleavages within the environment, but also strong links between smaller sub-groups.

3.3 Theoretical Arguments

On the basis of these perspectives and findings, what can we expect to be the results of the further analysis? How should the online networks of the British far-right be expected to influence their mobilizing potential? Based on the perspectives presented above, and especially the works of Caiani et al. (2012), Zhou et al. (2012), Bermingham et al. (2009), and Caiani and Wagemann (2009), networks identified online through hyperlinks are assessed to be of great relevance. Despite their inability to illuminate every aspect of the relations between far-right actors, the links

signal that friendly and cooperative relations exist, and that he actors linking to each other seek to be part of the same environment, and the same far-right network.

On the basis of all the perspectives elaborated on and scrutinized so far, certain broad arguments and assumptions can be made. Firstly, if the accounts of Köhler (2012) regarding the online sphere's ability of creating feelings of belonging to a large community are accurate, a natural continuation of this argument will be that far-right groups will experience better conditions for mobilizing than ever before. This should materialize in an increasing amount of far-right groups mobilizing online. In turn, this can be assumed to be conducive to forging strong alliances, as the various groups will identify a greater environment online, and thus be induced to joining the same struggle. On the other hand, as discussed above, it may also entail that the mechanisms which make single-groups reluctant to join in on coordinated mobilization are magnified, thus making the chances of strong networks even smaller.

Secondly, building on the British traditions of preferring street-based forms of mobilization, and the ideas that ideological interaction may contribute to mobilization, we can assume that most actors in the network do in fact have explicit ambitions of on-street mobilization. The network should thus primarily be composed of actors seeking on-street mobilization, probably closely linked to ideologically oriented actors, aiding in the ideological interaction. On the other hand, it will be interesting to analyse whether della Porta's argument regarding ideologically and operatively oriented actors, is can be identified. If her arguments still are valid, these two categories of actors should be engaged in strong inter-connected networks, in which they may build on each other's comparative advantages.

Thirdly, issues of ideological conflicts and groups' primarily local emphasis have been illustrated to make broad alliances difficult to form, thus making strong, on-street mobilization difficult to achieve. Given the online sphere's ability of transcending geographical spaces, we should expect that the network will be composed of actors with a more national outlook, and which try to form nationwide alliances. Still, ideological divisions, are – despite increased interaction – difficult to transcend, as illustrated by Zhou et al. (2005:49). The next chapter will elaborate on and highlight how these assumptions can be tested, as well as on how the general research question itself can be answered in a valid and reliable manner.

4. Designing a Study of Networks and Mobilization

"Online activism is dramatically and quickly changing how social movements and groups such as the EDL operate. This poses new difficulties for researchers and government alike to contend with" (Bartlett and Littler 2011:8).

Unfortunately for the aspiring student, conducting meaningful research does not simply entail studying some empirical phenomenon and generalizing in any way we please. Neither does it mean that our inferences can be drawn simply out of our own sublime reasoning. In addition to having solid theoretical foundations for our choices of variables and units of analysis, we depend on proper methodological tools in order to construct a strong empirical analysis.

In the introduction to this thesis, it was argued direct causal links between online activity and on-street mobilization is difficult to analyse validly and reliably. Such matters of validity and reliability will rather than being discussed separately, be integrated in the forthcoming discussions on units of analysis, scope and variables. It was also argued in the first chapter that a key element for answering the research question is to identify the clues which we know affect on-street mobilization. Chapter two presented which clues we are to look for in this respect. Chapter three made the case that these clues all are identifiable in online networks, and that understanding them in relation to these networks will provide us with greater insight. This chapter will illustrate how these clues are to be properly identified and analysed.

The overarching theme of this thesis is the increased presence and activity of far-right groups online as opposed to their still quite limited activity in the physical sphere. This chapter seeks out to develop and describe a research design suitable for analysing this relationship. Tools of social network analysis will be the aiding equipment in this context. The aim of this chapter is to persuade the reader that the methodological tools of chioice are not radical, but rather the best

ones for the job. Before conducting an analysis we must clarify three interlinked issues. Of which nature are the questions we are interested in? Which types of answers do we wish to produce? Lastly, which type of data material is available and appropriate for our study?

4.1 Research Question

Before entering such methodological debates however, it is necessary to repeat the thesis' key question of inquiry:

> ***Given its increasing online activity, why is the British far-right environment relatively weak at on-street mobilization?***

It should by now seem quite clear for most observers that this question is far too broad along dimensions of actors, variables, and time be answered fully within the limits of this thesis. Therefore the question will be limited and operationalized into more manageable forms. In chapter one it was hinted on that the more specific questions to be analysed were the following:

(i) ***Is the perception of a strong and cohesive online far-right network accurate?***

(ii) ***How do we understand the answer to this question in relation to the far-right environment's mobilizing potential?***

The remainder of this chapter will present how answering this question will be accomplished.

4.2 Unit of Analysis and Scope of Research

The unit of analysis of this thesis will be British far-right groups which possess and operate online resources in the form of a homepage exclusive to this group. The aim of the thesis is to map and analyse the far-right environment in the UK, and thus to understand the various groups which this environment is composed of.

4.2.1 Single-Country Study

Despite the obvious relevance and utility of including other states in a cross-country analysis, I will limit my analysis to the study of far-right environment in the United Kingdom. Della Porta (1995) for instance argues that a cross-country analysis is preferred, as all good social science research requires some point of comparison. I however find that my research question best can be answered through a different approach, consisting of a single-country study. In line with della Porta's argument, the analyses of Caiani and Wagemann (2009) and Zhou et al. (2005) on German, Italian and American far-right environments are used as comparative references.

In Western Europe today, despite certain interactions across borders,[32] most far-right activity is as discussed in chapter two, locally oriented. Since the interaction between far-right actors primarily are national and local phenomena, a single-country study thereby seems appropriate. The UK furthermore stands out as a very interesting case in this context.

Firstly, the British case provides a strong historical context given that the country has experienced radical mobilization for various causes over the last decades.[33] A strong far-right environment was present especially in the 1980s in the form of the still existing National Front movement (Collins 2011). Furthermore, the intractable conflict between Republicans and Ulster nationalists in Northern Ireland has materialized into strong on-street mobilization in several parts of Britain. Secondly, as discussed in chapter one, Britain is and has been home to several influential far-right groups and movements both historically, quite recently and also in the present (Collins 2011, Thorsen 2012, Hope not Hate 2012). In addition, discussions and debates about the growing far-right environment on the Internet have for quite some time been high on the agenda in Britain (see for instance Hope not Hate 2012). As will be illustrated further on, the number of British groups which are active in the online sphere is also quite substantial.

4.2.2 British Far-Right Groups

The research question of this thesis is concerned with various characteristics of *British far-right groups*. An important issue is however how to find proper units of analysis - in other words, how to identify far-right groups in the UK relevant for this analysis. Given the often illegal and contentious activities of such groups, a complete universe of these actors clearly big unknown, and one which cannot be identified through open sources. A possible universe may however be

[32] The various conferences, demonstrations and meetings of organizations such as SION, the European Defence Leagues, and others are scattered attempts of achieving this.
[33] On-street mobilization has been relevant for groups promoting Irish Republicanism, radical Islamism, Ulster nationalism, anti-Islamism, among others.

identified through certain strategies. "Because the groups are volatile and often associated with illegal activities and violence, they pose difficulties for researchers seeking to understand their structure and dynamics" (Zhou et al. 2005:44). This is a good illustration of the situation for researchers of groups which operate on the borderline of legality. The groups of the far-right in the UK are in a constant struggle with the police and other government agencies, meaning that their activities traditionally have been both limited and hidden.

The units of analysis in this thesis will be groups which can be identified as being affiliated with a far-right ideological orientation, which originate from and direct their attention towards a British audience, and which operate either a blog or organizational homepage. Because of this choice, it will be important to have a solid understanding and theoretical assessment of which groups that actually fit into such a description.

The strategy employed in this thesis has been to identify actors in the British far-right environment which - based on their ideological orientations, assumed mobilizing capacities and roles within the environment – can be seen as central groups. Thereafter, I have used these central actors as focal nodes in an online mining process for online hyperlinks and connections[34]. The mining process began from the webpages of certain prominent actors in the far-right environment in recent years – the English Defence League, Casuals United and RedWatch. As this process was completed and more actors were identified, the process was repeated until no new actors could be identified.

This process of finding proper units of analysis has thereby simultaneously entailed a process of gathering the data material on which the analysis rests. Through the gathering and systematizing of information on the online environments of the British far-right, I have thus also produced and identified the empirical base for the thesis. A complete universe of far-right homepages is inherently impossible to identify, given the online spheres' highly fluid and shifting nature. During the process of gathering data, several websites were initially identified, but subsequently found to be inactive or shut down only months later. The appendix will include a complete elaboration of the far-right groups included in this study.

In addition this has entailed that several websites have been identified, but been evaluated to be irrelevant for this thesis, due to either lacking an ideological focus or clearly being irrelevant as a possible source of mobilization. In relation to scientific standards, such a method will clearly be lacking, due to the amount of uncertainty linked to the universe of far-right actors. This is nevertheless a problem which is unavoidable, and which seems smaller than including all

[34] Such a process is a common strategy for several variations of social network analysis – and especially for those engaged in online networks (Caiani and Wagemann 2009).

identified links on all websites scrutinized. This would clearly entail a larger empirical basis, but also one heavily laden with several irrelevant actors included.

A final important note on the selection of actors for this analysis, is that certain political parties are included, despite their at times active opposition to the more extreme actors on the far-right, and their obvious democratic orientation. They are included in the analysis for two interlinked reasons. Firstly, as noted in chapter one, the quite similar study of Caiani and Wagemann (2009:74-77) found that such radical political parties play a central role in the German and Italian networks, and thereby to a great degree keep the networks together and of a denser composition. Secondly, several of the parties included are indeed political parties in the sense of participating in elections, but they also promote policies and have histories tied to more traditional far-right ideas of authoritarianism and anti-democratic ideals (the British People's Party is an example of this). Parties like the British National Party have historically also had strong affiliations with certain street-based groups like the National Front, and omitting such an actor from an analysis of networks and relations would thus risk omitting important insight.

4.2.3 Website Attributes

This thesis includes several varieties of websites, with differing outlooks and attributes. One issue is the most important, and potentially disturbing in this context. Several of the actors under study operate websites which can be categorized as *blogs*. Such sites are often constructed through sites like *blogspot.com* or *wordpress.com*. This entails that the sites are structured on the basis of similar frameworks, and most importantly in this context, a function of *blogrolls* is commonly included. The blogroll function is one in which the administrators of the blogs are encouraged to list other blogs or websites deemed to be of interest to the visitors. Organizations operating websites with a similar organizational outlook however, are freer to construct their sites the way they please, thus also omitting the link function altogether. Although not assessed to be highly damaging for this thesis, such differences between websites is important to take into account in any link analysis.

Another issue worth noting is that this thesis only includes original websites – and not social media groups or discussion forums. Interesting results could definitely be created through analyses of social media networks. The decision of emphasizing original websites rather than social media activity has several reasons. Firstly, the actors under study still devote a great degree of resources to the operating of their homepages and blogs, and these online resources thus seem to still be of importance for the radical groups. Secondly, gaining open access to social media channels of the various groups is both a very difficult and also ethically dubious matter. In order

to obtain information about links between groups in social media, membership and formal access to each group's individual social media platform would be required, and I have after some initial attempts of this, found this to be too difficult and time-consuming. In addition, social media platforms of groups are composed of individual members' profiles, and my entrance into these platforms could have interfered in matters of privacy. If the research was to be conducted by all ethically appropriate standards, individual approval for data collection in all social media platforms would be required, and this is clearly outside of the scope of a master's thesis. As will be discussed in the conclusions of this thesis, analysing such social media contents and networks is however something which is highly interesting, relevant and which should be emphasized in future research on the British, and other radical right environments.

4.3 Social Network Analysis

Through the former chapters we have seen how studies of Caiani et al. (2012) among others have had both quite overlapping ambitions and research strategies as this thesis. Where our studies separate however, is through the inclusion of social characteristics transcending the attributes used to create a sample of units of analysis. Thus, the research question of this thesis requires that we find data on online networks and on certain factors found to influence radical groups' mobilizing potential. In line with the former studies mentioned, I find that a hyperlink analysis is the best strategy in this context. Hyperlinks analysis is a variation of the broader social network analysis (SNA). Such analyses are able to produce insight into the communicative relations between actors, in *specific social contexts* (Scott 2012, Caiani and Wagemann 2009, Borgatti et al. 2009). In this thesis, the social network analysis will produce results which tell us something about the relations between far-right actors with differing and overlapping attributes.

Very briefly explained, social network analysis entails that we analyse various aspects of the *relations* of certain actors (Scott 2012:41). In its most basic form, SNA entails that we identify and analyse the relations between given actors in order to draw inferences on the nature of these relations. The network analyses referred to in former chapters all identify, register and analyse the presence or absence of communicative relations between far-right actors.[35] As the analysis conducted in this thesis does not contain numerical estimates or quantitative assessments, several of the more advanced aspects of SNA are irrelevant to discuss further in this section. What is relevant to mention however, is that SNA inherently entails that we analyse two relational aspects – namely of which *social* characteristic the *networks* of the actors under study are engaged in. Even

[35] See Appendix II for an example of how the raw material of a SNA looks like.

though social networks analyses are not all-encompassing in gaining insight into the networks of the actors they emphasize, they are nevertheless very valuable for supplementing other forms of research on similar topics (Zhou et al. 2005:44).

In the contemporary world with vast resources online for communication, network-building and ideological proliferation, the traditional activities of radical groups are changing (Bermingham et al. 2009). Far-right groups are in a larger degree avoiding clear-cut organizational structures that can be detected and monitored by law enforcers. Instead, much of today's organizing and coordination is based online (Zhou et al. 2005). Despite their often suspicious and careful nature, there are several important elements we can derive from the groups' new modes of activities. I find that social network analysis is well-suited for identifying such elements.

4.3.1 Hyperlink Analysis

Hyperlink analysis (referred to as link analysis further on), entails that we use the insights of social network analysis on the online links between the websites belonging to radical groups (Caiani et al. 2012:58-59). Social network analysis is a methodological approach which allows us to understand the relationships between actors in specific contexts, and to make inferences about the nature of these relationships (see e.g. Scott 2000, Caiani and Wagemann 2009). In the context of the far-right environment in the UK, this form of analysis can be used to understand the links and divisions which exist within environment. In very simple terms, hyperlink analysis requires data on actors' relations to each other, and through this data, important inferences can be drawn.

Caiani and Wagemann (2009:73-74) describe certain important elements which can be derived from analyses of online hyperlinks. Through identification of the direction of the hyperlinks – in layman's terms, who links to whom – it is possible to say something about which are the central actors in the network. Furthermore, other measures, such as of *density* are easily computable. Density tells us something about how many connections there are between all actors in the network. This measure varies between 0 and 1, where 0 implies a network without any links[36] and 1 implies that every actor is linked to each other. As will be illustrated in chapter four, such quantitative measures will however not be included in this analysis. The key elements to analyse are namely of different and more qualitative nature. Still, as we saw in the model presented in chapter three, the density of a network can be rather easily identified through graphical presentations of the networks.

[36] By definition, not a network.

4.3.2 Data Collection

This thesis' empirical foundation is as briefly mentioned composed of data material identified, collected and processed by myself. The material included in this thesis is thus not available in the same form in other studies, and can thereby be a new and valuable contribution to future research on British far-right groups. This however also clearly entails that the material itself is heavily laden with subjective interpretations and personal judgments. This is of course a recurring issue for many social science analyses, but may be of even greater relevance in this thesis due to the rather uncharted territories under scope. In the appendix the empirical basis for this subjective operationalization will be presented in the form of a brief description of all included actors. Hopefully this will strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings. Through a strong theoretical and historical background on the social attributes of British far-right groups, the effects of such subjectivity is sought to be kept at a minimum.

4.3.3 Possible Biases

The analysis presented in chapter five, and furthermore discussed in chapter six, will consist of several graphical models of the online hyperlinks between the various British far-right actors under study. These models will provide us with important insights, and be of assistance in understanding the mobilizing potential of this environment. Certain caveats should however be noted. Firstly, the models will not be able to give insight regarding the *strength* of the relations between the actors. They will only provide us with an understanding that relations in fact do or do not exist. This is important to be aware of, as the illustrations may give impressions of relations which cannot be inferred on the basis of the graphical illustrations.

Perhaps even more important however, is the issue of what I refer to as a *visualization bias*. By this I mean that the visualization of the social networks in the next chapter will create subjective impressions of the relations between actors on the basis of visual aspects such as the distance between actors. The models are constructed with this factor in mind, but it is important to make note of nonetheless. Therefore I will underline that the visualized distances between connected actors in the networks do not represent any underlying assumptions regarding the strength or importance of the relations. The distances are rather the result of making the models as easily read and understood as possible.

Finally, a key issue of any social science analysis is that of omitted variable bias (King et al. 1994). For this analysis, this entails that other aspects of online networks may be of greater relevance for explaining the mobilizing potential of the environment. It does however not entail

that factors outside of the online sphere which are known to influence mobilization, such as group finances, political opportunity structures or communal collapses, are omitted. As hinted on, these factors are clearly of relevance for a discussion regarding *all* factors influencing mobilization potential, but are not found to be of relevance in a test of how *online networks* influences this.

4.4 Variables

This section will elaborate on how the thesis' key variables are understood and operationalized. Firstly, I will elaborate on how online networks are analysed on the basis of hyperlinks and attributes. Secondly, on the basis of the discussions in chapter two, the concept of mobilizing potential will be further specified. Firstly however, one important issue must be noted. A highly important issue in this thesis is namely that of *endogeneity*. Briefly explained, in this thesis this entails that the mechanisms influencing the on-street mobilizing potential (ideology, local issues, action repertoires) have effects on the online networks. As highlighted through the former chapters, such effects will be an integral part of the analysis and discussion since these mechanisms are clearly important for both online and on-street mobilization. In more specific terms, the presence or absence of a strong online network will be discussed both in relation to the effects this will have on on-street mobilization, but also in relation to how the mechanisms of mobilization may aid in explaining the online networks identified.

4.4.1 Online Links

Online hyperlinks are operationalized to entail that one group's website contains a hyperlink to the website of another group affiliated with the British far-right. This further means two things. Firstly, that only British groups and websites are included in the analysis. Secondly, that groups and websites which fit into the category of being far-right are included. This clearly involves a substantial subjective component, but as will be elaborated on in the next sub-section, this is done with a solid theoretical and empirical basis. Above, it was noted that online hyperlinks can be considered as strong indicators of ideological bonds, common objectives and cooperation between radical groups (Caiani and Wagemann 2009:69). This argument is strengthened through a study conducted by Pilny and Shumate (2012), who have found that online hyperlinks can be seen as extensions of offline collective action. Together with the fact that online hyperlinks are a form of data material which is measurable and obtainable, these findings make it interesting to analyse the links between British far-right groups. Still, it is highly important to note that little can be inferred with any degree of certainty on what these links actually entail. In certain instances,

their role in signifying mutual interests and cooperation is very important, whereas they in other contexts are only listed on a website as a side-note or source of reference for visitors. Nevertheless, Caiani and Wagemann (2009), Zhou et al. (2005) and Pilny and Shumate (2012) all present strong arguments for why and how online links, although not laden with the potential to explain every aspect of a relation, function well as indicators of communicative relations being present, and thus a will to engage interactively.

4.4.2 Social Attributes

As discussed above, the selection of units of analysis is determined by certain attributes of the websites and actors under study. These attributes are chosen as a result of the theoretical arguments derived in chapter three. Seen in isolation, the attributes of the various far-right actors in the UK are not notably interesting in an analytical perspective. When analysed in relation to the online networks however, the attributes can tell us much about the general environment. The inclusion of these attributes makes this analysis into something more than a clear-cut hyperlink analysis, which only gives insight into the presence or absence of *relations*.

Density and Reciprocity

In the preceding chapters it has been argued that the British far-right environment is ridden by internal conflict, and that the degree of reciprocity in the form of mutually friendly relations is low. From the models of Caiani and Wagemann (2009) and Zhou et al. (2005) we saw how a network analysis provides us with a better understanding of such relations. Through the analysis, indicators of density and reciprocity will be possible to identify. The measure of density will be qualitatively operationalized, entailing that a numerical estimate will not be produced. Rather, the visualization of the networks, will provide us with strong indications of the number and nature of interconnections in the network. As discussed above, hyperlinks are not valid indicators of the strength of group relations. There are however certain ways we can understand the relations in other ways than only observing their presence. Firstly, reciprocal links should indicate a stronger relation than if only one actor links to the other without "getting anything in return."

Central Actors

A highly important theoretical argument which will be tested in the analysis is concerned with whether or not central actors are present in the network. The graphical models furthermore give us insight as to which actors are central in the network, and thus to the strongest degree are

connected to other actors. This can be identified both through identifying the actors which link the most to other – in others words seeking contact and communication with others. Even more, we should search for those actors which receive the most links – are linked to most heavily by others. These actors should namely be assumed to be the key actors in the sense that several others seek to show their support through linking to their site.

Given various observers' analyses and reports (see e.g. Eatwell and Goodwin 2010, Richards 2010, Thorsen 2012, etc.), certain actors should be assumed to take on such central roles in the online networks. The EDL, given its seemingly prominent contemporary role; the National Front, given its strong historical legacies; and the various political parties, given their obvious capacity to form a formal organization with a minimum of members.

Local Divisions

Despite having large-scale, often national ambitions, far-right groups (as all other political groups) are forced to prioritize their efforts, and to emphasize certain spatial areas more than others. Several scholars in this context argue that it is the local and communal issues which are the crucial factors in bringing about far-right mobilization. As the former speaker of the American House of Congress, Tip O'Neill once argued, all politics ultimately takes place locally. Several of the groups under study are groups which function as the national hub and main organization for several local divisions and groups. It is important to record this in order to understand if the groups with a local presence are using the web and influenced by it differently.

In this context it is very important to take note of the fact that several of the groups under study have a very large number of locally affiliated divisions, which themselves operate their own websites. The various local divisions of broader organizations are not included in this analysis – both due to the fact that they often only have a social media presence, and because it in quite many cases is difficult to assess where a local division starts, and the main organization ends.[37]

Ideological Orientation

In the preceding chapters it has been argued that radicalization processes can induce participation to radical behaviour and that ideological interaction may be of great influence on the mobilization of larger environments. It was furthermore argued that online activities and networks can have a

[37] The EDL's Luton division is a case in point in this context. The EDL originated in the London-suburb of Luton, and the local chapter in this community has to a large degree coincided with that of the national organization.

strong impact on such processes. Based on historical and empirical insight regarding the British far-right environment, this indicator will be divided into four rather broad categories – neo-Nazi, anti-Islamic, combinations of these two, and nationalistic. The aim is to identify ideological interaction between the various categories in order to understand the networks in a more comprehensive way.

Mobilizing Ambitions

When analysing the websites included in this thesis, in most instances, given the political and social programs of the various actors, their ambitions regarding on-street mobilization is possible to identify. Some first indicators are often easily available. Groups which operate sophisticated organizational homepages for instance often have stronger desires for mobilization. These groups commonly include information about preceding and upcoming demonstrations and street marches on their sites, and encourage participation (the websites of groups like March for England, EDL and the Infidels are good examples of this). The operationalization of this indicator will be done on the basis of the division made by della Porta (1995) regarding ideologically and operatively oriented radical actors. In this thesis, a dichotomy will be made on the explicit ambitions and attempts of mobilization online. In other words, the indicator will divide those actors actively using their websites to mobilize to on-street actions, and those which (at least explicitly) do not. Regarding the political parties which are included, their active encouragement for participation often entails trying to mobilize not only for electoral benefit, but also for participation to local party organizations and party-administrated demonstrations. Thus, when coded as *mobilization ambition,* this does in fact entail that these parties seek on-street mobilization.

4.4.3 On-Street Mobilizing Potential

The key phenomenon being analysed and scrutinized is the *mobilizing potential of the British far-right.* The further question is thus how we are to register and measure such potential. This is a matter of operationalization and of determining validity. Operationalization entails that we make the dependent variable limited and specified (King et al. 1994). Determining validity means that we evaluate if this operationalization provides us with the information and insight that our research question requires. The operationalization will be done in relation to the theoretical perspective of chapter two.

As the former chapters have highlighted, the emphasis of the thesis is on two interlinked forms of mobilization – on group level, and the networks between these groups. Thus, on-street mobilizing potential will be operationalized to entail the opportunities for individual groups to mobilize participants to the described public protest activities,[38] *and* more importantly, the opportunities of these groups for acting together and forming strong networks and alliances in such activities. In sum, this entails that the mobilizing potential of the groups under study will be seen as a result of their opportunities of escaping the obstacles of collective action on both a group and network level.

The choice of analysing mobilizing *potential* rather than actual *mobilization* is made for several reasons. Firstly, the data material available on the mobilizing potential of far-right groups in terms of membership counts and valid data on number of on-street demonstrations or violent events is far too weak to produce any form of valid inferences.[39] In addition, the direct effects of online activity on offline mobilization are very difficult to register given that the online universe is extremely changeable and dynamic. Recorded events of 2011 may simply not be put into the context with the data on online resources available today. At the time of the mentioned Blackburn events in 2011 for instance, the online environment was a very different one. The blog referred to in section 1.1, seeking to mobilize participants to the Blackburn events – Derby Patriots – is for instance today inactive.

4.4.4 Drawing Valid Inferences

The remaining question before actually conducting the analysis is if we can expect to produce valid inferences through the online link analysis. Social network analysis is, as discussed above, a helpful way of understanding various aspects of social environments, but is it sufficient for providing this thesis with satisfying results? Caiani and Wagemann (2009:69) argue that "[…] online links can therefore be considered as good indicators of ideological affinity, common objectives, or shared interests between the groups."

Given the rather small number of actors being analysed, the results will be presented graphically, rather than through numerical estimates. Such estimates are possible to produce, but a graphic presentation of the results will provide the subsequent discussion with a much better and more intuitive basis. This is the case primarily because a key purpose of the analysis is to illuminate how groups with various social attributes are interconnected in the network, and

[38] Demonstrations, street-marches, rallies, picketing of oppositional groups' events, organized violence, and other forms of contentious actions.
[39] At least at the time of collecting data – fall 2012 and spring 2013.

subsequently discuss what this may tell us about their mobilizing potential. Highlighting the attributes and relations graphically is therefore found to be a sound strategy.

Through the first two models of the online link analysis, alliances and splits within the far-right environment in the online sphere will be identified, enabling us to draw inferences about the composition of the online network. This furthermore enables us to conclude on the question of whether the network is highly interconnected, dense and influenced by strong, central actors – in other words whether it is a strong social network. The link analysis will produce qualitative measures of centrality and density. Measures of centrality entails that we will gain insight as to which actors that are most strongly connected with others within the network. Measures of density on the other hand give indications on how many of the actors under study which are in contact with each other. Most importantly however, the analysis will clarify how actors with various attributes are connected to each other in the online sphere.

These results will however require further interpretation if they are to say something meaningful about mobilizing potential. It is in this context that a solid understanding of the content on the websites under study and the groups themselves is crucial. As mentioned, an important contribution of this thesis is the data which has been collected and systematized on these various actors. It is assessed that the process in which this was done, has provided the thesis with a strong empirical foundation, on which the discussion of chapter six will be based. Even more, the thesis contains an appendix in which brief descriptions on all actors is included.

Chapter six will discuss and interpret the results in relation to the theoretical arguments made above. We have for instance seen above that mobilization is hypothesized to be affected by radicalization. Based on the theoretical discussions, I argue that it should be likely that the most ideologically capable and radical groups also are the ones which are the most central actors in the network. Furthermore, understandings of the various groups' framings may be of relevance for how we categorize and analyse their networks. Central actors' attributes and characteristics may help us in understanding which kinds of actors that carry with them the strongest legitimacy and power within the environment, and which thus may influence how this environment is mobilized. Are these central actors for instance emphasizing Islam or more traditional neo-Nazi ideology? Dense relations should furthermore be assumed to assist in the issue of coordination. With several links between actors it should be possible to coordinate mobilization to a much greater degree.

5. A Social Network Analysis of the British Far-Right

"Networks, it is argued, are an additional and necessary dimension of any investigation of collective action" (Cinalli and Füglister 2008:abstract).

This chapter will consist of a social network analysis of the online networks of the British far-right. The results of this analysis will form the basis of the discussions of the next chapter concerning the potential for coordinated and large-scale far-right mobilization. Section 5.1 will firstly present data obtained about certain key attributes of the far-right groups in question. The network analysis will furthermore consist of two parts. On the basis of the first two models, the answer to the question of the existence of a strong and cohesive far-right network will be derived. Thereafter the social attributes presented in 5.1 will be included in the analysis of the online links of the groups. Through this twofold strategy the relations between groups, and more importantly, the attributes of these networks will be visible and pave the way for interesting discussions in chapter six.

As discussed in previous chapters, the British far-right environment has practically always been marked by being chaotic, torn apart by internal conflicts, and thus experiencing low degrees of cohesion and endurance. In recent years, several new actors have been introduced to the far-right scene, and most notably among these is the English Defence League which has been the first collective in years to actually mobilize participants in the thousands to protests and demonstrations at several occasions. Included in these protests have also been other, smaller groups and movements which have been incorporated under the EDL-banner, and which thereby have signalled a growing trend of far-right cohesion in the UK.

5.1 Social Attributes of British Far-Right Groups

Below follows graphic a presentation of the data which has been collected on relevant attributes of the British far-right groups under study. This data will together with the online link analysis form the basis for the discussion of the far-right environment's mobilizing potential in chapter six. The data has been coded on the basis described in section 4.4.2. As noted, a more comprehensive description of all these actors is included in the Appendix.

Name	Ideology	Ambition	Local/National
A Case for Treason	*Nationalist*	*Ideological proliferation*	*National*
ATB/Combat 18	*Neo-Nazi*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
British Democratic Party	*Combination*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
Britain First	*Anti-Islam*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
British Freedom Party	*Anti-Islam*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
British National Party	*Combination*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
British People's Party	*Neo-Nazi*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
British Resistance	*Neo-Nazi*	*Ideological proliferation*	*National*
Broken Britain	*Anti-Islam*	*Ideological proliferation*	*National*
Calling England	*Anti-Islam*	*Ideological proliferation*	*National*
Casuals United	*Combination*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
Combined Ex-Forces	*Combination*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
England First	*Nationalist*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
England is Ours	*Combination*	*Ideological proliferation*	*National*
English Defence Leauge	*Anti-Islam*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
English Democrats	*Nationalist*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
English Nationalist Alliance	*Anti-Islam*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
English Volunteer Force	*Anti-Islam*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
Halal Campaign	*Anti-Islam*	*Ideological proliferation*	*National*
Infidels of Britain	*Combination*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
Jewish Defence League	*Anti-Islam*	*Mobilization*	*National*
Kafir Crusaders	*Anti-Islam*	*Ideological proliferation*	*National*
Lawful Rebellion	*Nationalist*	*Ideological proliferation*	*National*
League of St. George	*Nationalist*	*Ideological proliferation*	*National*
March for England	*Anti-Islam*	*Mobilization*	*National*
National Front	*Neo-Nazi*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
Nottingham Patriots	*Anti-Islam*	*Ideological proliferation*	*Local*
Racial Volunteer Force	*Neo-Nazi*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
RedWatch	*Neo-Nazi*	*Naming and shaming*	*National*
Scottish Defence League	*Anti-Islam*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
SIOE England	*Anti-Islam*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
UK Independence Party	*Nationalist*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
English Defence Leauge	*Anti-Islam*	*Mobilization*	*National and local*
4 Freedoms Community	*Anti-Islam*	*Ideological proliferation*	*National*

Table 1: Social attributes of the far-right actors in under study. All coding is subjective, and can be ascribed to the author's own judgments. The empirical foundation for this coding is referred to in Appendix I.

The total number of actors included in the table, and thus also the analysis, is 32. As we can see from the table, the British far-right is indeed divided on a number of dimensions. The number of anti-Islamic groups identified is combined 16, neo-Nazi groups count 7, the groups which are found to fall between these two orientations are 6 in number, whereas the nationalistically oriented groups make out the remaining 5.

Regarding these groups' ambitions for mobilization, a majority of 21 groups are found to possess such ambitions, whereas the remaining 13 groups are (at least so far) emphasizing ideological proliferation.[40] Furthermore, as highlighted in chapter four, the groups included in this analysis are all groups with a nationally oriented outlook, seeking national goals.

5.2 Link Analysis

Thus, so far we have seen how for instance the English Defence League can be categorized as an anti-Islamic group, nationally and locally oriented, and ambitious in the sense of trying to mobilize to demonstrations through their website. A historically well-known actor like the National Front fits many of the same descriptions, but promote a clear-cut neo-Nazi ideological stance. In this section, the ambition is to understand what this data can tell us when seen in a relational context. The aim is to gain insight into how the online environment may provide the physical environment with the potential to grow and integrate, and thus tell us something meaningful about how the Internet may influence the likelihood of collective mobilization.

This section will present five inter-connected models, which in various ways illustrate different aspects of the social networks of British far-right groups. Firstly, it will present two general models without social attributes, but which identify reciprocal relations and central actors. These two models will arguably present us with the answer to the first unknown of this thesis – whether or not the perception of a strong and dense network exists online.

This analysis however differs from other network analyses (e.g. Caiani and Wagemann 2009), through the subsequent models which, based on the dataset presented above, identify how groups with relevant attributes are connected. The second model identifies the central actors in the network. Model 3 highlights ideological orientation of the various actors, whereas model 4 contains information about the actors' explicit mobilizing ambitions. The final model presents us with information about the groups' local presence. The models will for matters of presentation be placed at the end of this chapter.

[40] Or in the case of the neo-Nazi website, RedWatch, naming and shaming of left-leaning individuals.

5.2.1 Network through Hyperlinks

The first two models provide good illustrations of the online links between the key actors of the British far-right environment. Compared to the network of German far-right actors presented in chapter three, we clearly see that the British environment is not as cohesively composed, and that a majority of the nodes have either zero or only one connection in the network – entailing that they are engaged in a network with low degree of density. Additionally, a strong finding is that the number of reciprocal links is extremely low. In other words, almost none of the actors under study are engaged in relations in which they express mutual interest in cooperation or relations in the online sphere. Certain sub-groups and cliques of actors can be identified in the model, and the network in the lower end of the model is probably the best example. These nodes are interconnected, but lack access or contact with the rest of the landscape.

Furthermore, the groups placed in isolation in the upper-left corner are all groups which when the process of data collection was started were identified to possess links to other actors in the network, but at the time of the actual analysis were found to be either isolated, or that their websites were inactive. The presence of the English Nationalist Alliance in this group is rather interesting in this context – and will be discussed in chapter six.

The second model highlights the various actors' centrality in the network in the form of being connected to other actors through hyperlinking. We can see that Kafir Crusaders – an ideologically oriented website links heavily to others, seeking contact with both anti-Islamic and nationalist groups. The same goes for the street-based group Casuals United. Perhaps the most interesting finding however, is the lack of centrality among assumed key players such as the English Defence League, the British National Party and the National Front. This finding will be thoroughly discussed in chapter six.

The subsequent three models included in this analysis separate the actors under study on the basis of their scores on certain social attribute indicators which are highlighted in the models. This makes it possible to combine the insight gained through the first two models, regarding the general composition of the network, with new insight which may give us additional understandings as to why the network is composed as it is. This fact brings us back to the point where this analysis separates from several other social network analyses – for instance that of Caiani and Wagemann (2009). Most importantly however, as we have seen, these social attributes are those which are assumed to have the strongest influence on radical environments' mobilizing potential.

5.2.2 Ideological Orientation

The third model of the analysis gives a graphic illustration of the ideological orientations of the British far-right environment. As discussed in chapter four, the groups are divided into four broad categories based on their ideological affiliations. Firstly, the actors with a yellow node are found to be anti-Islamic groups. From the model we can see that this category contains the majority of actors identified in the online environment. Secondly, the red nodes indicate that the actors have a nationalistic orientation – emphasizing Englishness or British cultural conservatism, rather than simply having their eye on religious or ethnic minorities.

Furthermore, the actors with white nodes are found to possess a rather clear-cut neo-Nazi or white supremacist ideological basis. Lastly, the orange nodes represent groups which combine both anti-Islamic and more traditional extreme right affiliations. The British National Party has for instance historically been highly affiliated with a neo-Nazi orientation, but is today significantly more active in emphasizing anti-Islamic and anti-immigration ideas.

An interesting initial inference we can draw, is that the neo-Nazi and the anti-Islamic actors to a very little degree seem willing to be affiliated with one another through the formation of online links. Whether or not this is due to an actual ideological barrier, or if other matters are of greater influence to create this effect, will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six. Nevertheless, this is an interesting finding, given several observers' attempts of labelling neo-Nazi and anti-Islamic actors as two sides of the same coin. Additionally, we can identify an anti-Islamic sub-group being present at the (visual) centre of the model. By closer inspection however, this sub-group is not experiencing dense relations in the manner one might have anticipated.

5.2.3 Mobilizing Ambition

Model 4 highlights how the various groups score on the indicator of their ambitions of mobilizing on-street. The orange nodes indicate explicit aims of achieving mobilization in other spheres than online. This often entails advertising for upcoming demonstrations, references to former protests, and explicit encouragement for readers to take to the streets.

A common assumption is that blogs are of a more ideological nature, with a lower ambition and capacity for on-street mobilization, and this is clearly identified in the model. Most of the green nodes – those not actively seeking mobilization are such ideologically oriented blogs. An interesting finding is that at the centre of the network, several of these ideologically oriented blogs are present – creating links between operative and ideologically oriented groups. Remembering the arguments of della Porta (1995) regarding the divisions between ideologically

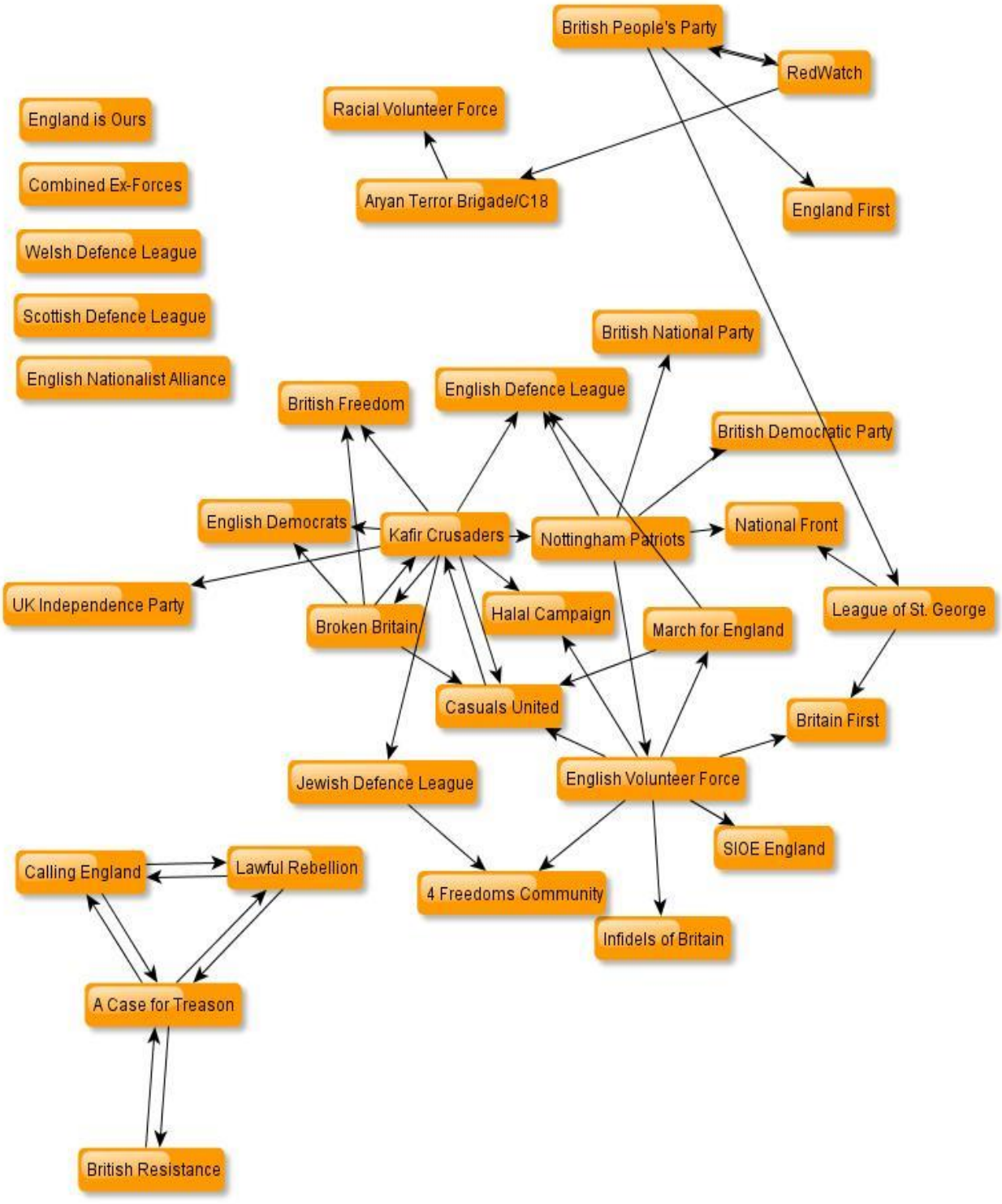
and operatively oriented groups within radical networks, this finding is interesting. Nevertheless, as will be highlighted in the next chapter, even though several groups with mobilizing ambitions and capacity are connected to ideologically oriented websites, these ambitious groups themselves are very weakly interconnected. Especially within the anti-Islamic sub-group this is clearly identifiable.

5.2.4 Local or National?

Model 5 illustrates how the groups under study are directing their activities – either exclusively nationally, exclusively locally, or both. A first important finding is that a substantial amount of the actors under study are found to direct their activities on both a national and a local level. This supports the assumption that online communication makes the world smaller, and furthermore makes it easier to coordinate cohesive behaviour on a larger geographical scale than before.

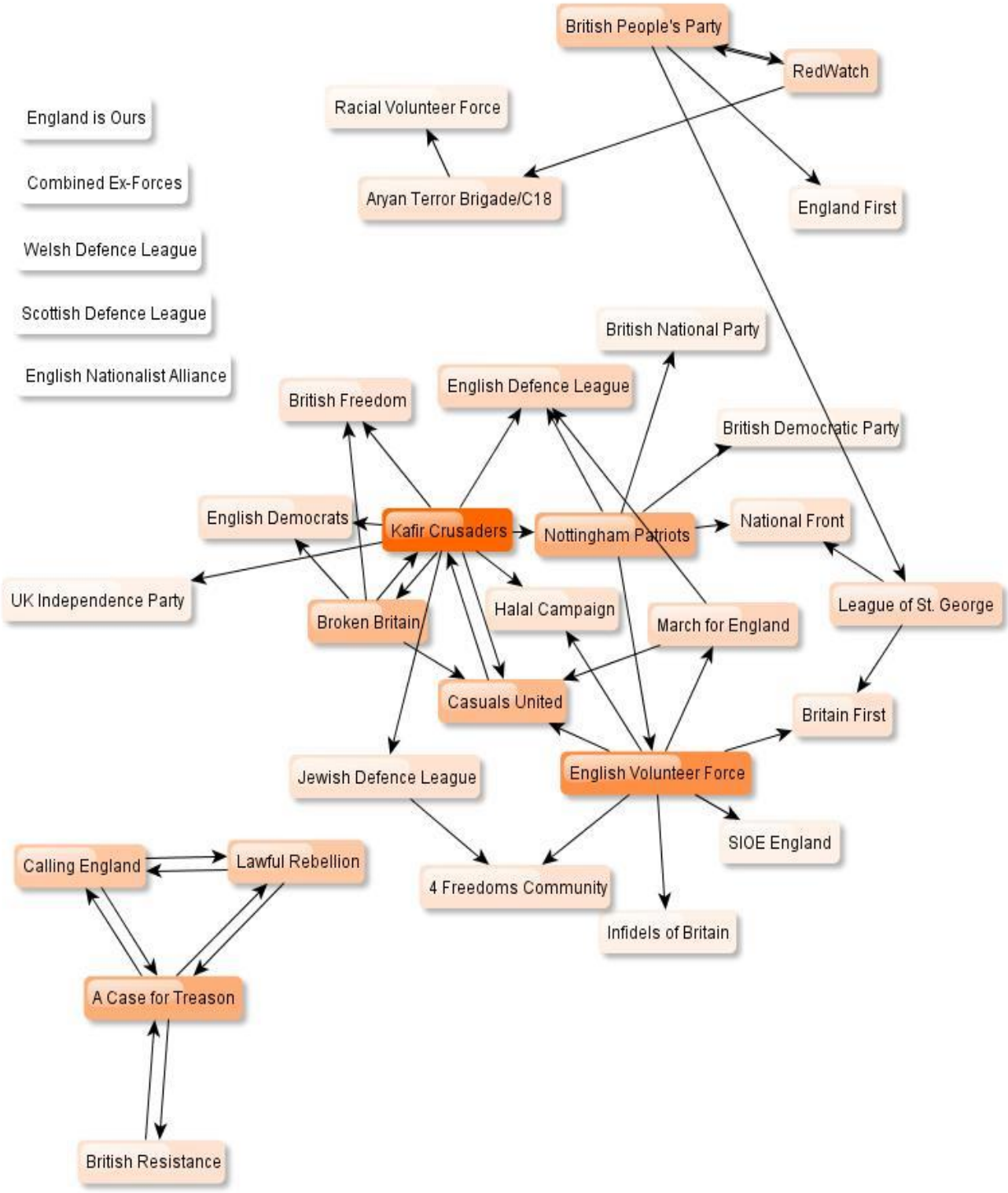
Apart from that, few general inferences can be drawn from the model, as the number of actors exclusively nationally oriented and that of actors with both a local and a national presence is quite evenly distributed, and there are no clear patterns of connection within the network. Comparing models 4 and 5 however may give us an indication on the connection between mobilizing ambitions and geographical orientation. A rather significant correlation between those actors with ambitions of mobilization and those with both a local and national outlook is namely identified.

Model 1: The Online Network of the British Far-Right[41]



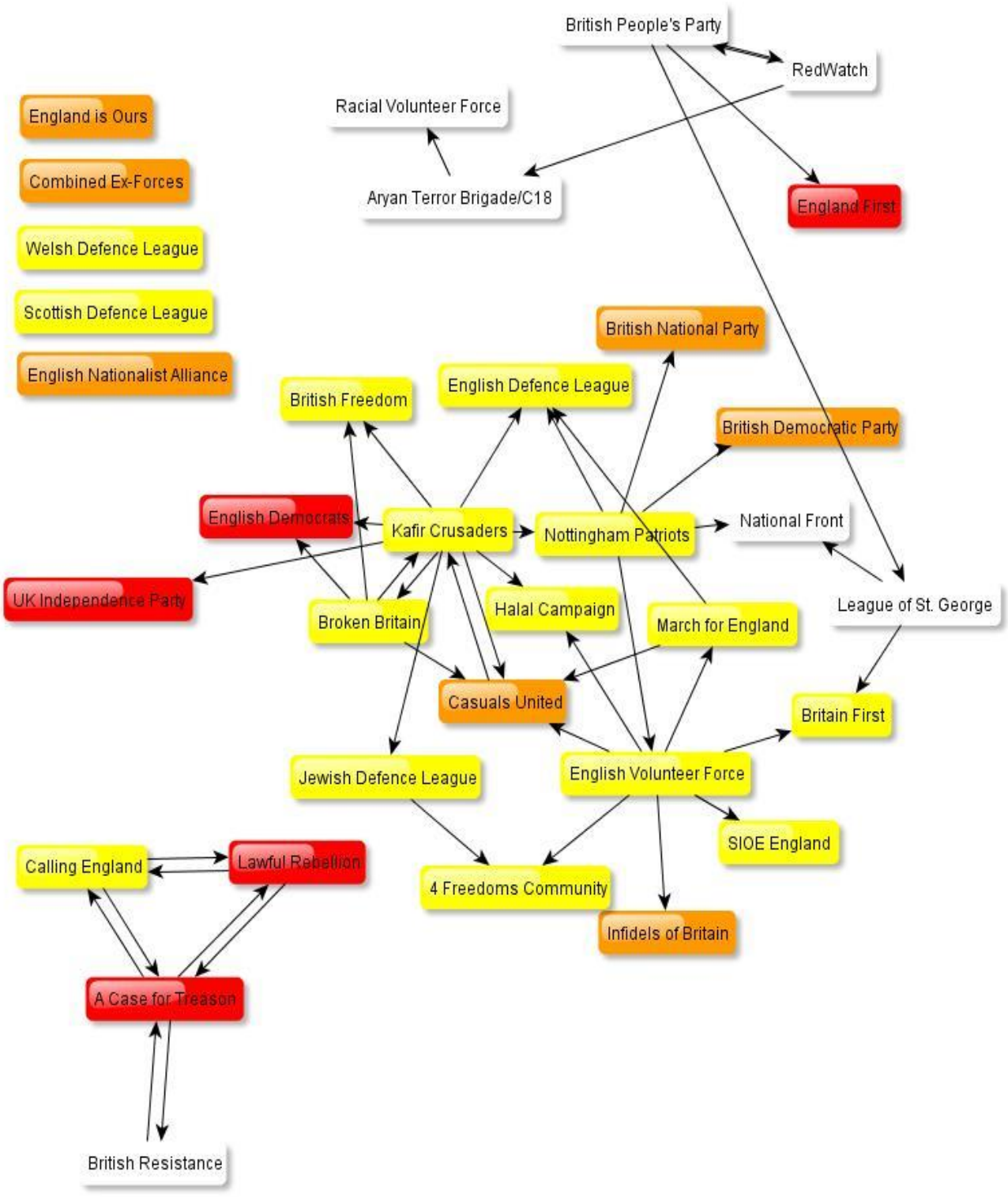
[41] The lines between the nodes indicate a link. When the arrowhead points to a node, it indicates that this actor is being linked to by the node of origin. A double arrowhead or two lines in opposite directions indicate reciprocal links.

Model 2: Central Actors[42]



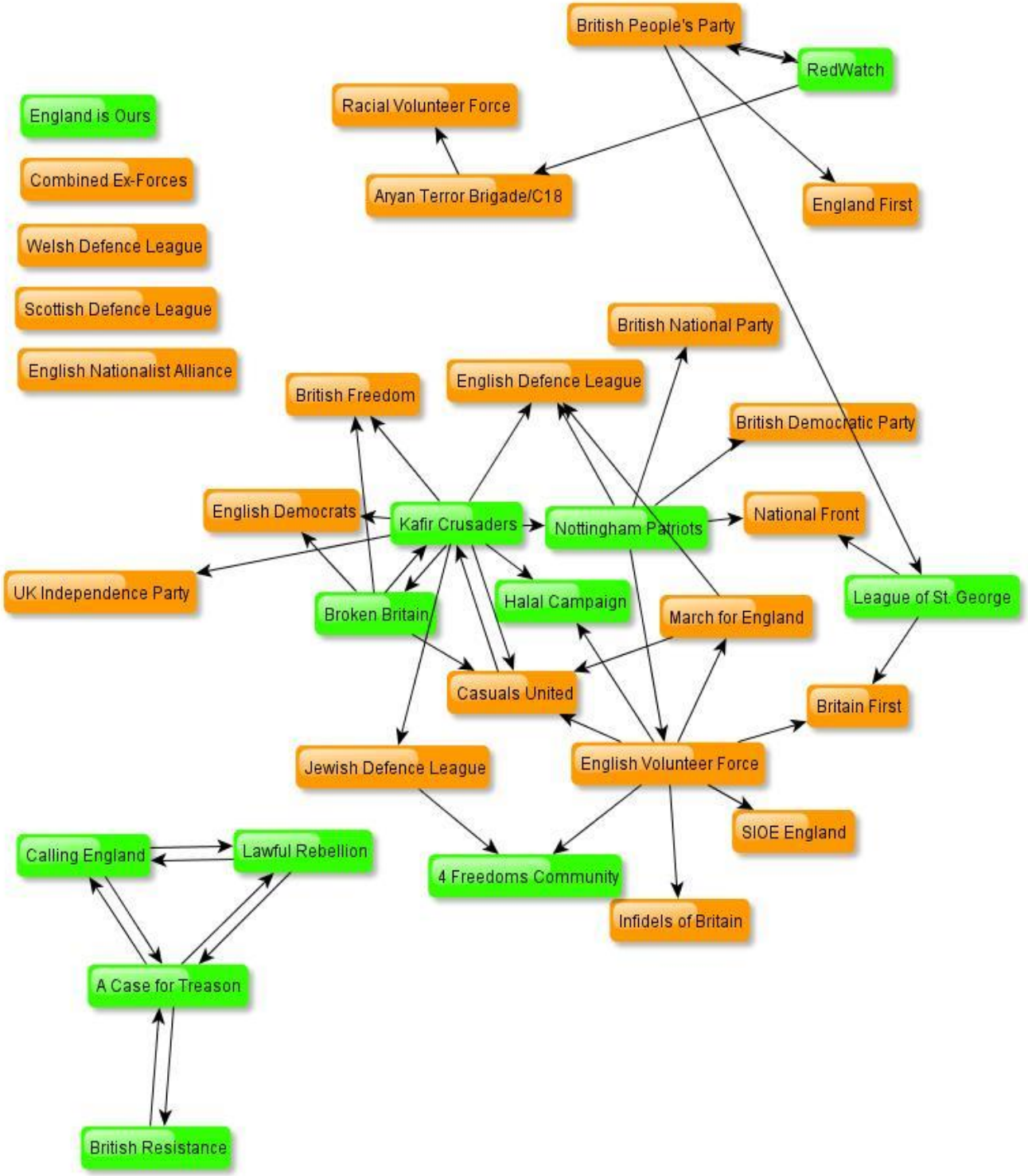
[42] The nodes with the darkest tone of orange are found to be the most central actors in terms of either linking to many others or receiving many links themselves.

Model 3: Ideological Orientation[43]



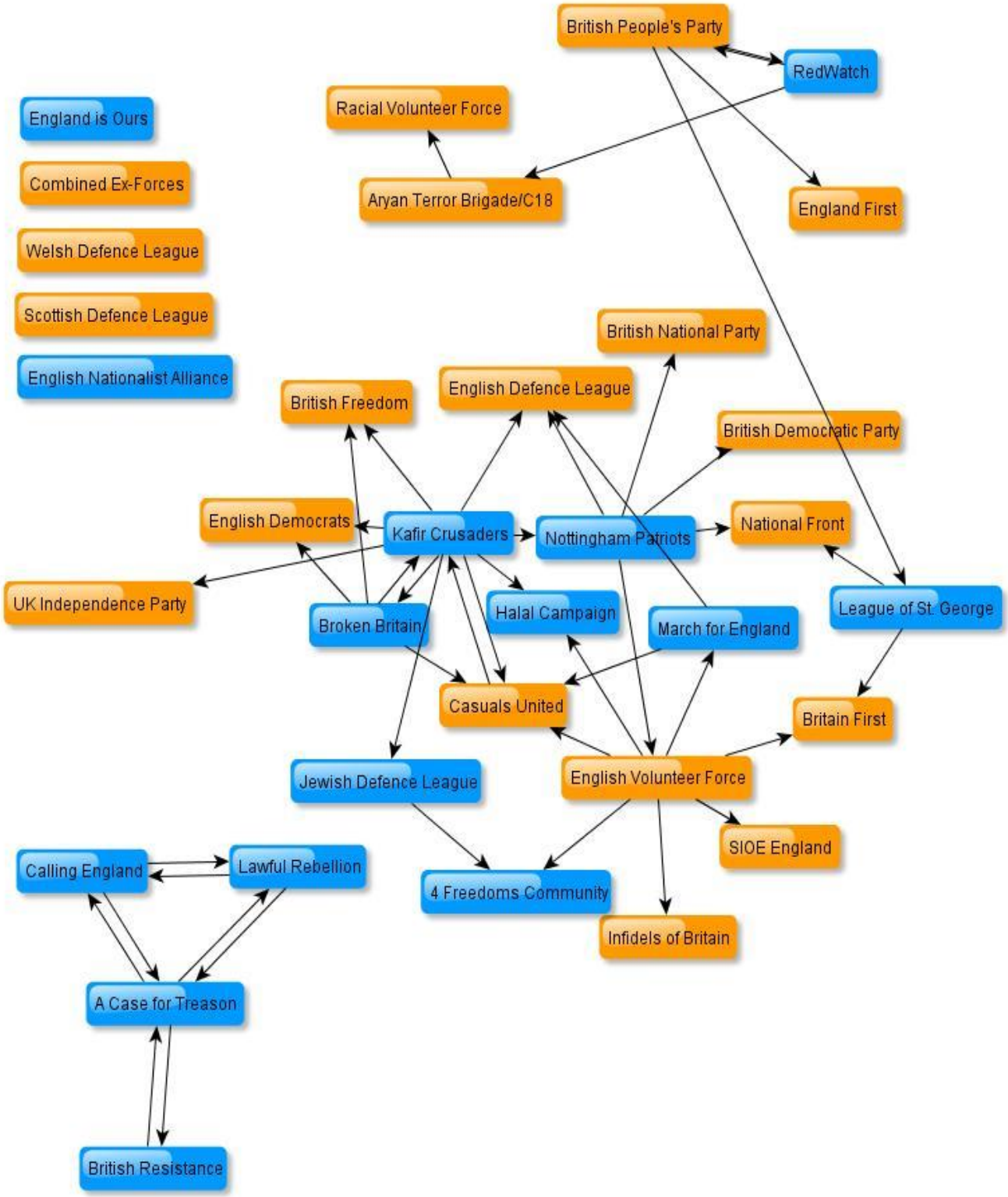
[43] Yellow nodes: Anti-Islamic
Orange nodes: Combination
White nodes: Neo-Nazi
Red nodes: Nationalist

Model 4: Mobilizing Ambition[44]



[44] Orange nodes: Ambition of mobilization on-street
Green nodes: No explicit ambition

Model 5: Local or National?[45]



[45] Blue nodes: Exclusively nationally based
Orange nodes: Both nationally and locally based

5.3 Summary

The findings of this chapter will be discussed and put in a broader context in the forthcoming chapter. For now however, some tentative remarks will be made on the models. In brief, the answer to the question of whether a strong social network exists online for the British far-right, is *no*. Very few reciprocal links between the actors in the network are identified, and the network is quite fragmented, especially in comparison to the Italian and German networks. Additionally, no clear central actors can be identified, even though actors like the EDL, the BNP or the National Front have been assumed to be such key actors in the British environment. The most central actors in the online networks are rather Kafir Crusaders, Casuals United and the English Volunteer Force.

Regarding matters of ideology, the ideological splits are quite clear, especially between the assumed poles of anti-Islamic and neo-Nazi groups. Models 4 and 5 are furthermore highly similar, indicating that the actors with a mobilizing ambition to a large degree resemble those with both local and national presence. The forthcoming chapter will discuss two interlinked questions on the basis of this analysis. Firstly, why the perception of a strong online network was found to be inaccurate, and in this context how the social attributes highlighted in the various models can be of assistance in answering this. Secondly, which implications these weak networks have on the mobilizing potential of the British far-right.

6. Discussion

Online Networks and the Potential for Mobilization

"The Internet is by far the worst offending area. Used correctly and effectively it is White Nationalism's greatest strength. Used negatively it is our worst enemy! […]" (British People's Party 2005).

This quote highlights a key element in the issues of the British far-right in their encounters with the online sphere, and their encounters with each other within this sphere. In the previous chapter the online networks of the most important members of the British far-right were presented graphically, and given brief descriptions. We saw that the various groups to a much lesser degree than anticipated are engaged in online relations, and furthermore that they are divided along certain dimensions of ideology or ambitions of mobilization. For instance, strong divisions between neo-Nazi and anti-Islamic groups were identified. It was also observed that most groups are emphasizing national struggles in their online activity, and that there are no clear divisions between those who exclusively have a national orientation and those which try to combine national with local aims.

This chapter will discuss these results in the context of the theoretical arguments made earlier. To remind the reader, the question seeking an answer regards why and how the increased online activity and mobilization of far-right actors fails to materialize into stronger on-street mobilization and alliances. The former analysis found that despite a strong online presence of the far-right environment, this environment fails to form similarly strong networks. The key argument being made in this discussion is that the mechanisms which often are aiding group mobilization - ideological and local conflicts as well as action repertoires - may prevent grander alliance-building, and thus a less dense network, both online and on-street.

6.1 The Weak Network and its Implications

The first issue this thesis sought to clarify was concerned with whether the British far-right was involved in a strong online network. As we saw, although a network exists, it is heavily fragmented and characterized by a highly decentralized and weakly connected structure. This finding will be the central issue throughout this discussion. The weak network will be discussed in relation to the mechanisms of mobilization elaborated on in former chapters.

Given the thesis' emphasis on the online sphere's assumed effects on on-street mobilization, a natural starting point for the discussion will be the assumption that a continuous process of online radicalism to on-street mobilization exists for the British far-right. I will argue that on the basis of action repertoires, online activity can in itself become an obstacle both to strong networks online, and even more to on-street mobilization. The network formed around the anti-Islamic website Kafir Crusaders will be scrutinized more closely in this section. Questions of local issues and the far-right's legacies of hooliganism will also be highly relevant in this context.

After discussing these issues, I move on to what I assess to be the key thesis' key argument and contribution. I make the case that group mobilization may be eased through the increased opportunities provided by the Internet, but that this furthermore is impeding to the formations of strong networks and alliances. This additionally makes on-street mobilization of several groups highly difficult to achieve. I furthermore explain the weak networks of the far-right through a critical approach to the field of link analysis. The argument being made is that the actors under study not necessarily aim at forming strong networks, and that they may find the formation of strong online networks damaging to their own cause. The general anti-Islamic environment will be discussed in greater detail in this context. It will also be argued that the online sphere rarely manages to transcend the present points of ideological division within the environment. The emphasis will be on the on-going conflict between the British National Party and the English Defence League. Lastly, the image will be somewhat nuanced in the sense that the fourth section will discuss how online mobilization in fact sometimes does provide important pathways to mobilization – although for a limited amount of time. The very starting point for the new wave of anti-Islamism will be of relevance in this, namely the formation of the English Defence League in 2009.

6.2 Going Online or On-Street?

It was previously argued that mobilization entails bringing people together and encouraging behaviour. As also highlighted, the Internet is a powerful tool for these purposes, and especially so for radical groups seeking to escape their marginal positions. Despite the weakly structured network identified, as we have seen through chapter three and the analysis of the former chapter, the far-right's online presence is nevertheless quite substantial. In order to be part of the modern political and activist scene, operating and mobilizing in the online sphere seems to be of great importance. Thus, it is pertinent to argue that in order to mobilize great numbers for your preferred far-right cause on-street, online mobilization today is a necessary prerequisite. In chapter two, the metaphor of a "conveyor-belt" of radicalization was described. Applied to the context of the online and on-street behaviour of the British far-right, the metaphor emphasizes how there is a continuous process of starting out as a radical actor online, and further down the road end up protesting on this very road. This section will however illuminate how the online sphere instead may become the end stop of the radical tracks.

6.2.1 Action Repertoires

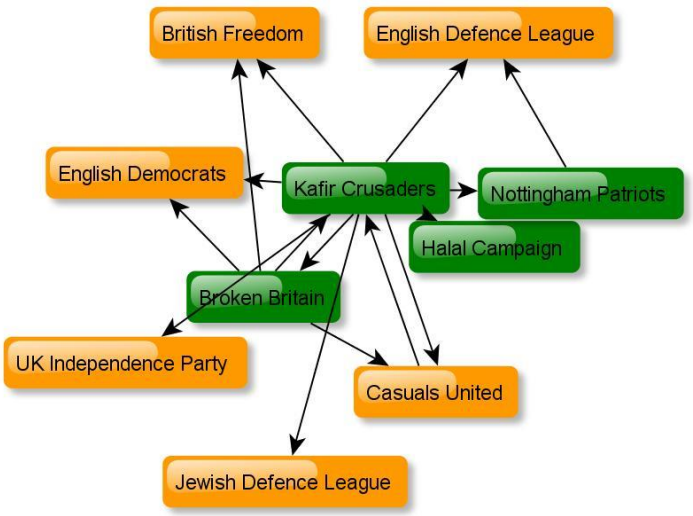
In chapter two we saw how della Porta (1995) among others, argues that radical environments often are divided into actors more ideologically oriented and those primarily emphasizing operative action. Her arguments, based on analyses of radical movements of the 1970s are clearly not completely transferable to the modern context, but nevertheless bring with them important perspectives. In model 4 of the former chapter, the various groups' ambitions of mobilizing on-street were highlighted in the network. The key finding was that a substantial amount of the actors in fact do seek on-street mobilization through online resources, and thus are not caught up in a repertoire of exclusively operating online. Still, as we saw in chapter two, the British far-right today is seemingly not significantly more operatively active on British streets than they traditionally have been.

British far-right actors have furthermore traditionally been conservative actors, in the sense that they rarely operate outside of their known modus operandi – both in terms of type of action and geographical location. Thus, new-found resources may not necessarily imply new forms of action. This may for instance entail that far-right blogs remain ideologically oriented, whereas websites of already operationally active groups, may not alter these groups' preferred modes of action. "The simplified assumption is that there is a direct relationship between given aims and chosen means: if the aim is anti-democratic or anti-systemic, then the means will be

violent (della Porta 1995:6)." Della Porta's quote is a good illustration of the implicit assumptions of many analyses of the behaviour of radical actors. These analyses assume that a clear causal link between aims and means exists. A key point in this context is that, even though anonymity is secured in online forums, and may induce more people to be mobilized online, this does not necessarily imply that offline mobilization becomes easier to achieve. The costs of being an active and open radical actor on-street will be present nevertheless, and transcending the barriers of collective action described by Collier (1999) thus seems to remain a difficult undertaking. Immediate rewards in the form of recognition and interaction with like-minded in the online sphere, aids in resolving the time-consistency problem through online networks, but this does not seem to aid on-street mobilization. Additionally, the online sphere is not only an echo-chamber in which feelings are intensified, as highlighted by Köhler (2012), but may also function as an outlet for radical engagement. Thus, even though the ideologically oriented blog Kafir Crusaders (KC) is reciprocally connected online to the operative Casuals United, this does not necessarily entail that KC's supporters and readers are riding the conveyor-belt of radicalization into on-street mobilization. This point will be highlighted below.

6.2.2 Kafir Crusaders: Ideological Interaction?

Discussing various threatening elements of Islam, the ideologically oriented group, Kafir Crusaders notes on its website: "Hopefully by this site exposing these issues and making people aware of them. We can fight off the threat of Islam a while longer. Nows the time to stand up and be counted while theres still time to before its to late!!!" (Kafir Crusaders n.d.).



Model 6: A visualization of the network around the anti-Islamic website, Kafir Crusaders. The orange nodes indicate that on-street mobilization is sought, whereas the green nodes indicate the opposite.

As elaborated on in chapter two, the discussions on how radical ideologies influence behaviour is, as Lia (2005) pointed out, difficult to conclude on. In other words, ideology is a weak single-explanation of radical behaviour. The recurring issue of coordination is important also in this context. If far-right groups are to be of any political influence, they will in Collier's framework need to be of a significant size. Taking part in movements and groups which fight for ideas seen by the majority as highly radical is a risky undertaking which may imply a reduced social status, being shunned from local communities or from the workspace.[46] Thus, the outcome is assumed to be that possible participants either decide to abolish their plans, or to join an existing (and often less radical) collective.

In model 4, a key finding was that the far-right network to a large degree is composed of actors seeking on-street mobilization, and that these actors in certain instances are inter-connected with actors more ideologically oriented. In chapters two and three it was argued that proliferation of radical ideology online is of importance both in the creation of an actual far-right environment online, but also the perception of such an environment being even greater than it may be. Visitors to the Kafir Crusaders' website, might through its contents and its substantial network of links to other similar actors, experience a sense of a critical mass of other active groups being present. The model above illustrates how this site functions as an important hub of ideological interaction in which visitors may find anti-Islamic articles, and also be directed to the websites of several anti-Islamic groups with mobilizing ambitions. Perhaps most important in this context however is that these ambitious groups to a very large degree engage in interaction online themselves – thus preventing a coordinated effort of on-street mobilization.

6.2.3 Casuals United or Hooligans Divided?

Thus, the former sub-section illustrated how the online sphere may create new action repertoires for far-right actors, which are impeding to the process of going on-street. What about the actors which very existence rests on such street-based mobilization – the hooligan scene? Are these actors forming stronger bonds and finding common ground online?

"The reason we are called "Casuals United" is because we seek to UNITE people, and our message is that fighting over football is pathetic and a waste of time" (Casuals United, n.d.). In chapter two, the far-right's legacies of football hooliganism were described. A group like the Casuals United today explicitly in name, actions and statements[47] emphasize its hooligan and

[46] Various online forum posts from right-wing sympathizers indicate the validity of this assumption.
[47] From the website of C.U: *"Casuals United blog, brought to you by patriots and football Casuals from around the UK. No "pc" bullshit here, just the uncomfortable truth."*

casual roots. The group's aim is to unite casuals and other football fans in a common struggle against Islam and immigration. Due to their similar preferences of street-marches and violent confrontations, we should expect that such hooligan groups will heed the call of Casuals United and *unite*. What can the online networks of the far-right tell us about the struggle to mobilize and unite the right-leaning football hooligans? And furthermore, what can the findings on this tell us about the general mobilization and uniting of the far-right? In order to assess this, we should analyse the networks of the groups with ambitions of mobilization and histories of hooliganism. Groups like the described Casuals United, March for England, EDL, SDL, and the National Front all fit this label.[48] From model 2 we see that especially Casuals United is indeed rather well-connected in the network, but that among the hooligan-based groups only the anti-Islamic March for England seeks connections online. Thus, a sub-group of a united hooligan network is not found to be present.

The highly similar structures of models 4 and 5 should even more be noted in this context. As noted in chapter five, the groups which seek to mobilize on both a local and a national level are to a large degree similar to those with mobilizing ambitions. In relation to the hooligan scene, this is also the case. Arguably this may have two interlinked consequences. Firstly, given the assumptions that far-right groups have a local outlook and primarily local ambitions, it entails that the likelihood of strong alliances being made between the hooligan-based groups is severely hampered by these groups' local reflexes. The further consequence of this is thus that the potential for cohesive on-street mobilization is increasingly unlikely to occur.

A unified hooligan scene thereby seems to be as utopian as the ideological aims they strive towards. In other words, the network analysis illuminates the fact that instead of speaking of *casuals united*, we should speak of *hooligans divided*.

6.3 Acting Collectively?

From the former section we can thus derive the following: Being an active, radical group online, does not lead to a continuous process in which the end-stop is mobilizing on-street. The weakly connected far-right network furthermore illustrates how ideologically oriented groups and the groups with mobilizing ambitions do not engage in relations which seem conducive to large-scale mobilization on-street.

This section will make the case that the weakly composed online network can be explained on the basis of common arguments of collective action. The network itself also makes

[48] See for instance Dunning et al. (1988) about the history of the NF in this context. The other groups' hooligan affiliations are described in chapter two.

the opportunities for large-scale mobilization even more difficult. Two key indicators of a strong social network are in this context absent from the one under study in this thesis – a dense structure and reciprocal relations. Combined, this give us indications that the far-right groups are highly reluctant to forming strong links online – just like they are reluctant on the streets or in electoral politics. Despite being suppressed and censored, most British far-right actors are engaging more frequently and more intensively in conflicts with each other than with governing state bodies.[49] In this light, the lack of density and reciprocal relations is not surprising.

However, the lack of central actors in the network *is* highly surprising. Not only is this the case along the lines of anti-Islamism and neo-Nazism, but also *within* these sub-groups. Model 4 even more highlights how the actors with mobilizing ambitions to a low degree engage in interactive relations. How do we explain such a lack of willingness to mobilize and cooperate in the online sphere? The key argument which will be discussed in this section is that the Internet may in fact enable *groups* to mobilize, but that this group mobilization itself often prevents broader mobilization-efforts from being realized.

6.3.1 A Social Network of Groups

As discussed in chapter two, key obstacles of large-scale mobilization for any (political) cause, are those of the costs of collective action. Mobilizing individuals to on-street demonstrations, protests or marches is in this framework dependent on the presence of a significant number of *existing* participants who all find that the costs of participating are not too high.

The networks clearly illustrate that the far-right landscape is inhabited by a substantial amount of actors, which to varying degrees have achieved to mobilize in a limited way on-street. This finding itself entails that mobilization to single-groups is occurring and is not completely prevented by the obstacles facing every attempt of collective action. Thus, it seems pertinent to argue that individually, far-right groups are able to mobilize – although, as most observers and reports on the British far-right's activities note, in a rather limited fashion. Köhler (2012) and especially Bartlett and Littler (2011) have illustrated how online resources are highly conducive in this process. Individuals are drawn into a movement for causes of ideological persuasion, feelings of belonging.

Highly important, several of the groups under study (the Infidels, the English Volunteer Force, the British Democratic Party) are groups formed through fragmentation of existing, larger movements. Although the direct reasons for these fragmentations are difficult to assess, an

[49] See Appendix I for several recollections of this.

assessment is that the Internet lowers the costs of fragmenting in such a manner. Like Köhler (2012) noted, the online sphere facilitates communication and lowers the resources needed in order to create new organizations. Such new organizations can in turn, as indicated above, find aid through the Internet for their mobilizing efforts.

In this context, as several observers of as different phenomena as civil wars and the British far-right scene have noted,[50] local issues are often of even greater relevance for inducing individuals into action. In the context of the growth of the EDL, Richards (2011) argues that national and large-scale motivations are not the keys to understanding this. Rather, various deprived local communities in which the EDL achieved a presence, were mobilized on the basis of this deprivation and experienced issues linked to immigration. An important element in this context is that assumed central actors like the EDL, the BNP and the National Front, are rather isolated from other similar actors. Instead, newly founded groups like the English Volunteer Force,[51] clearly seeking to increase their local and national presence, are actively seeking to form bonds with other groups with a local presence, like Casuals United and the Infidels.

More importantly however, is the question of why these groups, which by themselves struggle to achieve any form of political relevance, are not able to work together. We saw in chapter two how the issues of coordination, free-riding and time-consistency must be overcome if collective action is to take place. The argument made further on is in theoretical terms that these issues are transcended on group level, but clearly not on a broader network-level. The weak networks illustrated in the former chapter provide us with a strong empirical basis for such arguments. The costs of breaking out of existing movements are lower through the resources of the web, making large-scale mobilization efforts very difficult to achieve. The outcome is thus, a social network of groups, rather than a cohesive social network.

6.3.2 A Decentralized Network

In chapter four it was elaborated on certain actors which through existing literature and media reports are assessed to be central actors in the British far-right environment. These actors were the EDL, the National Front, and certain political parties like the BNP. A striking finding of the analysis is these actors lack of centrality in the online networks. On the basis of collective action theory, central actors would assist strongly in overcoming the issue of coordination. Empirically, this should have been materialized in smaller factions and groups with overlapping ideological aims to join in under a central actor's banner – in the analysis identified through key actors with

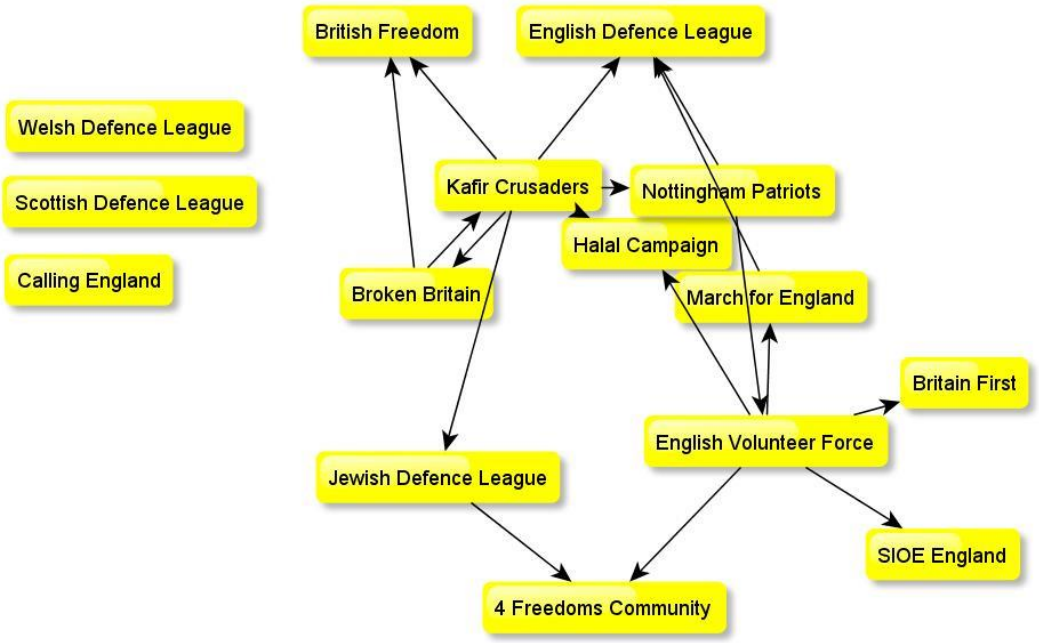
[50] As noted in chapter two, Kalyvas, Richards, Bjørgo, among more promote this view.
[51] See Appendix I for more information about the EVF and other groups.

several links to other actors. Model 2 clearly illustrates that such actors are not present. In the analysis of Caiani and Wagemann (2009), such central actors are identified in both Germany and Italy – functioning as focal points for the general environment or larger sub-groups of actors.

Firstly, I find that a pertinent argument is that the networks observed and analysed in fact may be weak as a result of deliberate strategies of the assumed central actors. In more methodological terms, this entails a validity critique of the link analysis' approach to the concept of centrality. So far in the discussion, the assumption that groups will in fact have an interest in linking up online, but fail to do so due to ideological and local divisions, has been underlying. As hinted on in chapter one however, this may not be the case at all. Groups with a self-perception of being the central actors in a network may in fact view linking to other actors as signalling weakness. If the EDL indeed is as strong as it claims to be, it would in this perspective not need to seek contacts with other similar organizations, and rather mobilize individually. I furthermore find that such an argument can be utilized to understand the lack of links directed *to* these assumed central actors. Smaller groups and movements like the English Volunteer Force or the Infidels, which have been formed as a result of fragmentation within the larger EDL, will seek to pose as strong and important actors online, not needing relations with other similarly structured and oriented groups.

6.3.3 The Anti-Islamic Environment

The anti-Islamic environment fits into the image painted above along a wide range of dimensions. The environment itself has an impressive online presence, consisting of wide range of ideologically oriented blogs to organizational homepages of street-based movements like the EDL and political parties like the British Freedom Party alike. Nevertheless, as Model 2 and 3 illustrates, this network is neither densely composed nor characterized by strong actors with mobilizing ambitions.



Model 7: Derived from model 3, this is a visualization of the online links of the anti-Islamic environment.

The existence of relatively strong actors like the EDL, should in the extension of the argument above, ease the issue of coordination by inducing more participants and groups to mobilize under the EDL-banner. Arguably, this is not happening to the assumed degree. Model 2 and 3 illustrate how the EDL is much more isolated than we could have reason to believe, and that even ideologically affiliated actors are not actively linking to the EDL. Seemingly then, the online activity of the British far-right is not being used with the intent of mobilizing and creating strong alliances. How can we explain this?

On the basis of collective action theory, with the rise of the EDL, most small factions and groups affiliated with the anti-Islamic environment, should be induced to work together with the EDL, in order to achieve as much influence as possible. Or should they? Such an argument can namely also be turned on its head. From the literature on political parties and electoral outcomes, we know that smaller factions or groups will be very hesitant to integrate with larger actors. The fears of losing influence or local and personal positions will often hamper cooperation, and make the smaller factions to be more explicit in their criticism of the larger actors, in order to strengthen their own position. Such mechanisms will clearly hamper the chances of cohesive mobilization, but may nevertheless induce mobilization of smaller groups. After the initial successes of EDL (which will be discussed more intensively in section 6.4), it was for instance interesting to view how affiliated groups like the Casuals United – despite some attempts of cooperation – have sought to mobilize more on a platform emphasizing the fallacies of the EDL,

rather than on an anti-Islamic platform. In this light it seems easier for smaller actors to grow when they can illustrate how larger and more influential actors are not fit for the responsibility of being in a "spearhead position."

The radical, anti-Islamic [52] movement, the English Nationalist Alliance (ENA), is additionally a case in point in this context. ENA emerged in 2010 with aims of uniting nationalist and anti-Islamic groups in the same struggle, but their efforts have – as so many others – culminated in organizational and personal conflict with the EDL and other groups. Although not directly linked to this example, it is an important conclusion that despite the assumed conducive effects of online interaction, even explicit and ambitious attempts of forging strong alliances can be aided by the resources of the web.

In this context, the lack of EDL as a key and central actor in the online networks is quite understandable. Furthermore, it may thus be argued that the very online elements which have been conducive to the formation of several new far-right actors in the UK, have been the exact opposite in the aims of bringing larger environments together on the streets. The key conclusion is thus that issues of coordination may be eased for single groups through online resources, but that this furthermore is strongly preventive for cohesive far-right mobilization.

The network analysis above illustrates how clear ideological barriers exist within the British far-right environment. In model 3 we see that the direct links between actors and groups adhering to an anti-Islamic and a neo-Nazi ideological orientation respectively, are slim to none. What is interesting nonetheless is that the anti-Islamic scene – a rather new environment of far-right actors – is much more prevalent online than the traditional parts of the British far-rght (the nationalists and the neo-Nazis). We have also seen how groups belonging to this environment which have been the best mobilizers to demonstrations and street-marches in recent years. The key argument of this section is that despite a growing online presence, the anti-Islamic environment is not aided by the online sphere to creating a stronger, and more tight-knit network. The online sphere may be conducive to creating more anti-Islamic groups, but their cooperation, is not a necessary further outcome.

6.3.4 An Ideological Shift

As discussed in chapter two, radicalism by definition exists on the margins of the political scene. All actors under study in this thesis are categorized as being radical, and thus belong to the margins of British political landscape. Regardless, this far-right margin is as we also have seen

[52] Although categorized as a combination of anti-Islamic and nationalist/racist movement.

characterized as containing important ideological divisions, and a vast array of groups seeking to highlight their own unique position. Through the table of chapter five, and models 3 and 6 we can furthermore see that anti-Islamic groups make up a substantial part of this far-right margin.

The former sub-section nevertheless clarified how this anti-Islamic environment is weakly structured, still heavily laden by internal conflicts. In this context it is a highly important aspect to note that a growing trend among the British far-right seems to be that former actors of the racially oriented far-right, today increasingly promote views from the anti-Islamic landscape. These groups are however not functioning as links and "middle-men" between the poles of anti-Islamic and neo-Nazi groups. In fact, none of these actors are directly connected to any group belonging to the racially oriented neo-Nazi scene. My assessment is that due to the limited space on the margins of the political landscape, any minor alterations of ideological orientation may entail dramatic consequences. When the British National Party increasingly shift their hostile attention towards Muslim immigration rather than Zionism or authoritarianism, they may be viewed as trespassers into other groups' territory. The EDL's highly active distancing from the BNP may be case in point in this context – and vice versa.

It is clearly problematic to draw valid inferences on only a few observations, but the cases of Casuals United and Infidels of Britain are interesting nonetheless. These groups have ambitions of mobilizing to demonstrations and hooligan-inspired street-marches, and both have roots to a racially oriented hooligan scene. A relevant observation from model 3 is that especially the Casuals United movement is seeking towards the anti-Islamic scene, rather than the racialist one in their online activity. A post on the website of the group from January 2013 furthermore highlights the group's role in mobilizing to anti-Islamic protests – and seeking links with such actors.[53] The post promotes a demonstration organized by the rather newly formed English Volunteer Force, a group interconnected with Casuals United online.

This scene is additionally one which, as we have seen above, has a strong preference for displaying their apprehension and discontent through street-based activity. In reference to Caiani et al. (2012:13-14), the anti-Islamic groups' dominant world views thus seem to prefer such activity. Regardless, as discussed above, obstacles of collective action has so far prevented these groups to form strong alliances on-street and organize their efforts.

As previously discussed, several British activists and observers argue that groups and parties like the EDL and the BNP belong to a common environment. In a former chapter however, it was briefly mentioned that the leader of the British National Party, Nick Griffin, last year published a comprehensive report, in which he sought to reveal the evils and fallacies of

[53] http://casualsunited.wordpress.com/2013/01/18/english-volunteer-force-demo-birmingham-evf-edl/

exactly his supposed partner in crime - the English Defence League (Goodwin 2012b). Despite sharing a common revulsion towards Islam and immigration, these influential actors, are seemingly engaged in hostile relations. We have seen how certain actors, like Casuals United, are seeking online connections with groups oriented towards the EDL. Model 3 also highlights how an anti-Islamic actor like the Nottingham Patriots, sees no conflict of interest in linking to both the EDL and the BNP (this is also the only link the BNP enjoys from any other far-right actor). Given the increased ideological interaction between actors within the environment, we should expect that the EDL and the BNP would find common ground and seek to work together. The exact opposite is however reportedly occurring – with the BNP-report and the formation of the rival British Freedom Party as the most recent examples.

6.4 A Temporary Aid

So far then, the picture presented has been very bleak for the British far-right environment as a whole. Although several smaller groups and factions indeed are active on British streets today, they are to a very small degree achieving this in a larger scale or in alliances with other similar groups. This section will however give this picture a bit more colour, and illustrate how online activity in fact may be of aid – although seemingly only in special settings, and for a limited period of time.

In chapter two, it was argued that mobilization – as other forms of collective action - often may be the result of dramatic events (Tarrow 2011:7). In the UK, large-scale mobilization under one, united banner has come the closest in recent years through the efforts of the English Defence League. Although today experiencing the seemingly inevitable fragmentation and internal conflict, the EDL has, as the described Blackburn events illustrate, been able to mobilize both a large number of participants, but also drawn support from several, smaller organizations and movements. Chapter two also highlighted the increasing apprehension and discontent among a larger proportion of the British public towards issues of culture, communal conflicts and religion. This section will through the case of the EDL illustrate how the online activity of the far-right in specific settings may be of aid in achieving cohesive and strong mobilization. The key argument is that dramatic events, given the right circumstances may provide such settings.

6.4.1 The EDL Mobilizes

In Luton in 2009, a group of Islamist extremists[54] picketed a homecoming parade for British soldiers who had served in Afghanistan-campaign. Luton was furthermore at this point a stronghold for Islamic and far-right radicals alike, and had been the scene of several violent incidents and protests related to this conflict (see e.g. Richards 2011 or Garland and Treadwell 2010). Following the scrupulous and wildly unpopular actions of the Islamist group, a group calling itself the "United Peoples of Luton" – primarily formed on the basis of existing local casual- and hooligan structures – was formed (Jackson 2011:15).

After mobilizing heavily online, the United Peoples of Luton was able to attract groups and individuals with both a similar hooligan background and other background, into demonstrating under the same banner of the English Defence League (Jackson 2011:14-16). Subsequent demonstrations – like that in Blackburn – have signified the mobilizing potential and strength of the EDL in recent years.

A leading expert on the contemporary far-right in the UK, Matthew Goodwin noted already in 2009 that: "Four hundred people that can be quickly mobilised online and will travel to demonstrations is seen as very useful resource" (BBC 2009). The strength of the EDL in its formative years can in many ways thus be ascribed to the online sphere, and the possibilities of forming networks and mobilizing online. Even more, the large-scale success of alliance-building and mobilization can in the perspective of Tarrow (2011:7) be seen more as a result of a dramatic and extraordinary event (the Luton-demonstrations) which to a large degree were aided by the resources provided by the online sphere.

The next section will however illuminate and discuss the results of the network analysis in the light of this – from the point of view of the EDL – positive development.

6.4.2 The EDL Fragments

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the EDL has despite of its key role in the anti-Islamic movement, failed at creating a strong anti-Islamic or far-right network. In the models the lack of direct links from other anti-Islamic and far-right groups to the EDL is highly surprising. I find that this finding provides a good summary of the key findings of the thesis.

The theoretical arguments of both chapters two and three were concerned with how the mobilization to British far-right groups – although laden with obstacles of acting collectively – occurs quite frequently, and is even easier achieved through the opportunities provided online.

[54] Al-Muhajiroun

The formation of the EDL is a strong case in point in this context. Still, this mobilization was arguably something more than the mere formation of a small faction of individuals seeking to cause havoc together. As the former sub-section highlighted, the EDL emerged as a result of alliances being struck between far-right *groups,* forming a network struggling for the same cause. The online sphere provided this process with increased opportunities of interaction and coordination.

The present situation is however that the EDL has experienced a strong tendency of fragmentation and internal conflict. The movement has in this light also experienced a substantially lower ability of mobilization to their current demonstrations (Mulhall 2012, Hope not Hate (2012). Groups like the English Volunteer Force and the Infidels have been formed as direct results of the internal conflicts of the EDL, and are together with March for England challenging the EDL as the leading mobilizing force with a far-right outlook in Britain today. In the light of the arguments presented above, this development does not seem special or as a surprising development. Though overcoming the large obstacles of forming a far-right group, the EDL could not function as the leading mobilizer to a grander, far-right network. The obstacles of collective, group action are highly difficult to transcend, and seem to only be possible to overcome in the prospects of dramatic events.

6.5 From Online to On-Street?

This chapter has had the ambition of providing interpretations to the models of chapter five which illustrate the online networks of the British far-right. The further aim has been to view these findings and interpretations in relation to the headline of this section. In other words: How does the weak online networks of the British far-right influence its mobilizing potential?

It was firstly argued that the resources provided by the Internet are strongly conducive to the formation and mobilization of single-groups. The anti-Islamic scene illustrates how such an environment of similar actors, are failing to form a strong network, precisely because of the increased opportunities of mobilizing to single-groups. Secondly, the case was made that the influence various actors achieve online may be preventive for these actors to be persuaded to mobilize on-street. Della Porta's arguments of networks divided into operative and ideological actors working together, found some support through the example of Kafir Crusaders and its links to operative groups. Still, these operative groups are almost without exceptions unwilling to cooperate and interact in the online sphere. Thirdly, the analysis of the networks and our knowledge on various groups' characteristics and history illustrate that the anti-Islamic

environment is conquering more space in the general far-right landscape – although not through the formation of strong networks. Finally, it was argued that online mobilization indeed has been conducive to on-street mobilization and alliance-building in certain instances. The caveat has though been that such mechanisms have primarily occurred as results of dramatic events, or been short-lasting attempts.

Regarding individual groups, it seems highly likely that the online sphere reduces the costs of either forming new, or breaking out of existing groups. When it comes to the environment as a whole however, these processes themselves contribute to an increasingly fragmented and divided environment. Thus, the conclusion must be that the broad, British far-right is not experiencing a journey from the online to the offline sphere. They are not uniformly going from online to on-street.

7. Conclusions

"For instance, some observers […] note that the viral spread of extremism online, especially social media, can act as a surrogate offline social network," (Bartlett and Miller 2012:2).

What are we left with after this discussion and analysis? Which inferences can we validly draw on the basis of the analysis and our theoretical and historical background? This chapter will briefly gather up the threads of the thesis as a whole, and finally make certain remarks on alternative answers and future research needs.

7.1 Gathering up the Threads

The main argument of the thesis is quite similar to that of the British People's Party referred to above on page *xii*. The far-right is unable to mobilize in a strong manner because of the all-encompassing conflicts on-going within the environment itself. The lack of relations and communication between assumed affiliated actors is a surprising, but key finding of this thesis. I find that this lack of dense networks can be understood on the basis of the same mechanisms which influence on-street mobilization - such as ideology, local issues and action repertoires. Additionally, when the online activities of far-right groups in fact *do* contribute to mobilization to demonstrations, street-marches or rallies, the described mechanisms make this mobilization into a limited phenomenon for a single or a few groups, rather than including the entire environment. In other words: The far-right environment fails to become a strong far-right *network,* both online and on-street due to the very mechanisms which make group mobilization possible.

This thesis has a rather convoluted and twisted theoretical argument. Therefore, instead of concluding on a general and abstract level, some broader conclusions through the example of the English Defence League will be presented. This seems like a natural strategy, as the EDL was the starting point of the thesis, and may be argued to be protagonist of the text as a whole. The key question of inquiry of the thesis was how online activity of far-right groups influence the potential for far-right mobilization. Through the brief history of the EDL, it is possible to derive several important inferences on this matter.

Firstly, the EDL is affected by the same mechanisms which have been important for far-right mobilization in Britain for decades. Chapter two illustrated how these mechanisms are tied to local issues, ideological conflicts, preferred modes of action - with fragmentation and conflicts as the most common outcome. Secondly, the Internet-era has been of great influence on these mechanisms, although not altered them substantially. The third and fourth chapters highlighted how online hyperlinks can provide us with valid information on the social network of radical groups – which furthermore give strong indications about these groups' potential for cohesive mobilization. On a more specific level, the first key finding of the analysis conducted in chapter five – the vey weak social network online – can to some degree be attributed to the presence of actors such as the EDL. The online sphere provides a strong arena for mobilization *against* the EDL, and aids smaller factions fragmenting from the larger movements. Even more, this increased opportunity of group mobilization seems to prevent broader alliances being struck. This is valid even for ideologically affiliated actors like the anti-Islamic environment in which the EDL is a key actors, and also for actors with a similar legacy and ambition of action. The hooligan-based groups, in which the EDL also is a part illustrates this point.

Thus, the threads of far-right mobilization in the UK have been gathered in this thesis. These threads have been represented by the online relations between far-right actors, and have been found to not be as complex that their untangling was impossible. This lack of complexity and interrelations have however been found to both cause and be caused of strong knots within the far-right environment itself. These knots are knightly knit through ideological divisions, local issues and preferred modes of action.

7.1.1 Contributions

In chapter one it was argued that this thesis may provide two contributions. Firstly, it was argued that the key empirical contribution was the improved understanding obtained about the mobilizing potential of the British far-right – in the contemporary world governed by the laws of the Internet. In retrospect I find that this claim is valid in the sense that social network analysis has illuminated important aspects about the online – and thus also the general – relations within the British far-right environment. The analysis has not been able to make specific estimates regarding the mobilizing capacity or potential of the environment, but this was not the ambition. The ambition was rather to understand how online activity and networks may influence the potential for mobilization. In the light of recent years' highly recurring claims that radical actors' use of the Internet will alter the dynamics of their operations and thus also their potential for

growth and influence, this analysis has in several ways brought some nuances to this dramatic image.

This brings me to the second and methodological contribution. Although rather basic and lacking quantitative sophistication, this analysis has illustrated how we through analysing relations and social attributes of the groups engaging in these relations, can draw important inferences, which would have been difficult to uncover systematically through other methods.

7.1.2 An Alternative Explanation

Although certain references to various notable individuals have been made throughout this thesis, it has been a willed decision to exclude the analysis of individuals in this text. Nevertheless, the fragmented nature of the British far-right can not solely be attributed to social mechanisms such as ideological divisions or local issues. Only by taking a brief look at the personal conflicts connected to the EDL and its leader, Tommy Robinson[55], the BNP's leader Nick Griffin, or between these two, several organizational splits can be identified. The Infidels was for instance formed on the basis of a personal fallout between Robinson and Infidels' leader John "Snowy" Shaw, whereas the British Democratic Party saw its birth after a strong conflict between Griffin and former BNP-member Andrew Brons.[56]

Regardless, the personal conflicts are also connected to a more general argument, in the sense that the key members of a radial group often will see it in their personal interest to achieve as much influence as possible. Often this is done through the formation of a new, rivalling group to existing once. This argument was, as discussed in chapter six, additionally relevant in the context of groups themselves, as the small, locally oriented groups see it in their interest to remain independent and keep their individual strength, rather than being encompassed by larger networks.

7.2 Further Recommendations

This thesis may be an example for future research on radical groups in the modern era, as it illustrates how it is possible and achievable to collect, systemize and process information on an entire social environment. As highlighted, most ambitious far-right actors today are operating a website, on which much information can be obtained and processed, like in this thesis.

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[55] This is a pseudonym – his real name being Stephen Yaxley-Lennon.
[56] See Appendix I for references to these incidents.

I recommend and encourage that he important work done on individual radicalization processes should be continued, and especially in the context of the far-right. I find that this thesis contributes somewhat in underlining an important issue in this context, namely that going from online activity to on-street radical behaviour is not a continuous process. Further analyses of what causes individuals to take a break from their computer and instead break windows in radical despair, should in other words be conducted.

Even stronger, my recommendation is that future research should emphasize the elements not achieved in this thesis – primarily through the analysis of far-right groups' use of social media like Facebook or Twitter in their mobilizing strategies. Such social media are increasingly being used by radical environments – both as arenas of ideological discussions, but also for the organizing and mobilizing of participants to on-street behaviour. Conducting online-based field-work or doing a systematic content analysis of such social media outlets, is in my assessment, the logical and most important next step in research on the British far-right environment.

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Important note: References and links to the various websites of the groups under study are referred and listed in Appendix I. The same goes for all media and activist reports regarding all the groups. Including these references in the bibliography would in my assessment entail that it would be more difficult to see the various reports in relation to the groups being described.

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Appendix I: British Far-Right Actors

Further follows a brief elaboration of certain key characteristic of the far-right actors which have been under scrutiny in this thesis. Some actors will due to the available information and their relevance for the analysis be granted a broader description than others. This appendix does not have the opportunity of listing every media report on every group in question. Certain key references will be made, but this is not a exhaustive list. An important source has been that of the activist group Hope not Hate, which has a substantial amount of knowledge on the various groups. It should however be noted that this group is – as mentioned – highly activist oriented, and that it should not function as the only source for judgments of what constitutes as *far-right* or *extremist*. Their reports are nevertheless highly interesting and thorough. An example is the following: URL: http://hopenothate.org.uk/counter-jihad/country/uk. Even more, various other observers have produced interesting material and guides to understanding the general far-right scene in the UK. The Extremis-project is one such source, which is highly updated, producing meaningful and reliable reports. URL: http://extremisproject.org/2012/10/new-players-on-the-british-far-right-a-beginners-guide/

A Case for Treason

As the name implies, this is an online actor emphasizing a nationalistic struggle with illegitimate authorities who allow for immigration and the European Union's increasing influence over the UK.

URL: http://acasefortreason.org.uk/

Aryan Terror Brigade/Combat 18

The violent, right-wing extremist "franchise" Combat 18, goes under several names, and has due to its principle of "leaderless resistance" several affiliated websites and groups. The Aryan Terror Brigade seems to be the C18's British wing, at least in the online sphere. Combat 18 is linked to several terrorist attacks in the UK in the recent decades, and declares itself to be a racist organization seeking to overthrow democratic rule of law.

URL: http://www.atb318.com/

Media and activist reports: http://www.splcenter.org/home/2012/spring/neo-nazi-website-targets-enemies-lists-personal-information;
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/panorama/1672100.stm

British Democratic Party

The origins of the BDP fit into the tradition of far-right fragmentation and personal conflict in the UK. Formally founded in early 2013, the party is an offshoot of the BNP, and is led by a former prominent BNP party member – Andrew Brons. The party combines anti-Islamic and traditional, race-oriented right-wing notions in their campaigning.

URL: http://britishdemocraticparty.org/

Media and activist reports: http://www.searchlightmagazine.com/archive/how-the-british-democratic-party-was-born; http://www.searchlightmagazine.com/blogs/searchlight-blog/british-democratic-party-to-launch-nationally; http://www.nationalistunityforum.co.uk/index.php/british-democratic-party-launches-in-leicester/

Britain First

The BF is a political party, campaigning on a rather radical anti-Islamic platform. Like the BDP, the BF is also a result of personal conflicts and fragmentations from the BNP. Formed in 2010, the party has enjoyed little support, and seems to struggle in finding its place between their right-wing BNP-roots and their viral anti-Islamic and evangelical Christian emphasis.

URL: http://britainfirst.org

Media and activist reports: http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/hate-groups/bf/; http://www.edlnews.co.uk/index.php/latest-news/latest-news/985-britain-first-make-a-grab-for-the-edl-support-base

British Freedom

British Freedom is a political party which emerged as the electoral wing of the EDL in 2010. After various personal strifes and controversies, former EDL-organizer Kevin Carroll in 2012 has taken over the role as party leader. The party follows a rather clear anti-Islamic ideological line, in which it explicitly emphasizes its democratic orientation, and its role as a "vanguard for human rights."

URL: http://britishfreedom.org/

Media and activist reports: http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/apr/28/britain-far-right-anti-islamic

British National Party

The BNP is the far-right party in Britain which has experienced the greatest electoral success in recent years, but also high amounts of internal conflicts, ideological shifts, and controversy (Goodwin 2011, Trilling 2012). Traditionally, the party was highly oriented on race and nation – with links historic roots in the highly racist National Front, but has to an increasing degree met the new millennium by shifting towards a more immigration and Islamic oriented stance.

URL: http://www.bnp.org.uk/

Media and activist reports:

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/21/nick-griffin-bnp;

http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/oct/16/bnp-andrew-brons-resigns-mep

Various local branches: http://merseysidebnp.blogspot.no/

British People's Party

A traditionally racist and neo-Nazi oriented political party emphasizing the preservation of White British people. The BPP was formed in 2005 as a splinter organization of the former Nationalist Alliance, which sought to unite all neo-Nazi movements under one banner.

URL: http://bpp.org.uk/

Various local branches: http://www.bppmanchester.blogspot.no/;

http://lancashirebpp.webs.com/

British Resistance

A sophisticated and important racist, neo-Nazi website, emphasizing matters of race and culture in the UK.

URL: http://thebritishresistance.co.uk/

Broken Britain

Stealing the name from a quote by David Cameron about the fractured nature of several deprived, local communities, Broken Britain is a blog emphasizing anti-Islamic and anti-immigration sentiments.

URL: http://oncegreatbritain.blogspot.co.uk

Calling England

Calling England is an anti-Islamic blog, aiming to proliferate anti-Islamic ideology and news on immigration and Islam to the UK.

URL: http://callingengland.net/

Casuals United

Casuals United is a joint venture of former football hooligans in the "fight against Islamic extremism." The group consists of several local divisions, which campaign, demonstrate and engage in violent events from time to time. Divisions of CU have participated in demonstrations held by the EDL. Casuals United explicitly reject notions and ideas affiliated with neo-Nazism or white supremacism, but several media reports, videos, and personal links within the group indicate that the group should be characterized as one combining elements of both the anti-Islamic and the neo-Nazi movments

URL: http://casualsunited.wordpress.com/

Media and activist reports: http://edlnews.co.uk/index.php/latest-news/latest-news/997-casuals-united-forge-links-with-neo-nazi-group; http://antifascistnetwork.wordpress.com/tag/casuals-united/; http://www.guardian.co.uk/football/2009/aug/10/english-violence-militant-football-islamist; http://www.blottr.com/breaking-news/casuals-united-announce-alliance-national-front

Various local branches: http://casualsunitedsouth.wordpress.com/; http://bristolcasualsunited.wordpress.com/

Combined Ex-Forces

Combined Ex- Forces is a highly radical group for former and current members of the British armed forces. The emphasis of the group is on demonstrating and protesting against immigration and Islam. The group has operated and demonstrated together with the National Front in the past, and carries with it several more traditional extreme-right ideas.

URL: Website today inactive. CXF is however active on Facebook.

Media and activist reports: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12231832; http://edlnews.co.uk/index.php/latest-news/cxf-and-the-infidels/515-the-cxf-nazis-and-paul-james-exposed

England First

A highly nationalistically oriented political party, emphasizing English culture and tradition as opposed to British tradition. The party has also been active in campaigning on their Christian heritage as opposed to Islam and other religions.

URL: http://efp.org.uk/

Media and activist reports: http://inside.org.au/immigration-race-and-the-british-election/; http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/19/far-right-fragmenting-bnp

England is Ours

A rather eclectic outfit, England is Ours today primarily operates as a news and ideology proliferating group. Formed as a protest against a local pub in Milton Keynes being sold and furthermore transformed to a mosque, the group has mobilized to demonstrations in the past, and was perhaps best known in England for inviting the Quran-burning pastor Terry Jones to the UK. The former website included links to the BNP, National Front and the Stormfront forum, but this is today inactive, and a new ideologically oriented site is today running.

URL: http://englandisours.com

Media and activist reports: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12231832; http://threecountiesunity.blogspot.no/2011/05/milton-keynes-england-is-ours-website.html

English Defence League

The English Defence League is arguably the spearhead of a new form of right-wing movements today, enjoying online support from tens of thousands of British citizens, and mobilizing in a large degree through online activity (Bartlett and Littler 2011, Copsey 2011, Richards 2011). The EDL developed in the aftermath of a demonstration held by a radical Islamist group against British soldiers returning to Luton from the Afghanistan-campaign. Since this incident, the anti-Islamic movement has enjoyed an increasing number of both supporters and active participants in recent years, and is seen as the most influential anti-Islamic movement in Britain and Western Europe today (Bartlett and Littler 2011).

The movement deviates from political parties and from clear-cut violent movements in several ways. Firstly, it is not a political party seeking political power. Furthermore, most the EDL is not openly racist or violent, and argues that it promotes democratic values and human rights (English Defence League 2012). During the last year however, the EDL seems to be experiencing a significantly declining tendency in terms of media attention, attendance in demonstrations and protests.

URL: http://englishdefenceleague.org/

Media and activist reports: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-12945734; http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/mar/26/clashes-english-defence-league-protest; http://extremisproject.org/2012/08/united-kingdom-tracker-22-08-12/; http://derbypatriot.blogspot.no/2011/04/edl-demo-blackburn-2nd-april-2011.html

Various local branches: http://englishdefenceleague.org/divisions

English Democrats

The English Democrats is a nationalist political party, primarily emphasizing mobilization for English nationalism. It is also campaigning on a familiar platform of anti-immigration and cultural conservatism. The ED has tried intensively to unite all English nationalist parties and organizations under the same banner, but has yet to achieve any form of success on this note.

URL: http://englishdemocrats.org.uk/

Media and activist reports: http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/hate-groups/edp/; http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/the_daily_politics/8274899.stm; http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21335384

Various local branches: http://englishdemocrats.org.uk/our-party-structure.html#structure

English Nationalist Alliance

The English Nationalist Alliance is perhaps the best example of the troubles of uniting several far-right actors under one banner. It emerged in 2010 with the aim of uniting nationalist and anti-Islamic groups in the same struggle, but has – as so many others – ended up in organizational and personal conflict with the EDL and other groups. Today it tries to mobilize through Facebook, and no longer operates a functioning website.

Media and activist reports: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1299224/English-Nationalist-Alliance-clash-police-protest-streets-London.html; http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2011/2/26/edl-leadership-finally-dissociates-itself-from-english-natio.html

A browse through the FB-site of ENA indicates that it has and seeks a local presence several locations: http://www.facebook.com/pages/English-Nationalist-Alliance/170875669635671

English Volunteer Force

A more radically oriented anti-Islamic group (re-)formed in mid-2012. The group was, like so many other groups, formed by breakouts from the EDL who also had been former members of the BNP (Extremis Project 2012). The EVF has explicit ambitions of uniting the far-right, but has so far been unsuccessful in this highly difficult undertaking. The EVF has ambitions of performing less "sober" demonstrations, and instead mobilize to flash mobs and street-marches.

URL: http://englishvolunteerforce.co.uk/

Media and activist reports: http://extremisproject.org/2012/10/new-players-on-the-british-far-right-a-beginners-guide/; http://www.anti-fascists-online.com/new-kids-on-the-block-meeting-the-english-volunteer-force-evf/; http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/english-volunteer-league-protest-in-birminghams-1244767

Various local branches: http://emaf.noblogs.org/post/2012/09/26/evf-the-latest-fascist-brand/;

Halal Campaign

The Halal Campaign, or "Boycott Halal" which it also operates under name of, is a collective of people actively promoting anti-Islamic ideology, and especially directed at stopping Halal as a custom in the UK. The group and website is included in this thesis, because it seems to be an important point of reference and link for several other actors, thus connecting more actors together within the network.

URL: http://www.boycotthalal.com/

Infidels of Britain

The Infidels of Britain is a highly radical group, with ties to both anti-Islamic and neo-Nazi ideas – but which seem to emphasize the notions of white supremacy to a stronger degree today. It emerged as a splinter organization of the EDL after a fallout between key members. The group has furthermore been tied to violence and racist actions towards minority groups, and also towards political opposition.

URL: http://www.infidelsofbritain.mysite.com/

Media and activist reports: http://iengage.org.uk/news/2402-infidels-of-britain-protest-outside-birmingham-primary-school; http://www.creativehive.org/post/1053; http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/nov/19/edl-splinter-group-target-unions

Various local branches: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/child-sex-grooming-the-asian-question-7729068.html?action=gallery&ino=3; https://twitter.com/NWInfidels

Jewish Defence League UK

The Jewish Defence League UK is the British, Jewish division of the EDL – thus emphasizing anti-Islamic ideology, and participating in Defence League mobilization. Rhetorically and ideologically more radical than its English affiliate.

URL: http://jdl-uk.org/

Media and activist reports: http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/blog/article/1546/roberta-goes-it-alone;

Kafir Crusaders

Kafir Crusaders is as of spring 2013, a group operating online, highly oriented on anti-Islamic ideological elements. The rather radical anti-Islamic rhetoric and ambition is in other words quite easily identified, although so far exclusively on an ideological level.

URL: http://kafircrusaders.wordpress.com/

Lawful Rebellion

Lawful Rebellion is an ideologically oriented blog, emphasizing the English' people's right to rebel against unlawful and illegitimate government policies. The blog is nationalistically oriented, but includes immigration as a major concern in the context of such "unlawful policies."

URL: http://lawfulrebellion.org

League of St. George

The LoS.G is a neo-Nazi website engaged in an ideological struggle to unite Europe under the neo-Nazi banner. The LoS.G claims to follow in the legacy of Oswald Mosley, a profiled, historical figure for British fascism.

URL: http://leaguestgeorge.com/

March for England

Among the many new street-based movements forming in opposition to immigration and Islam, March for England is one of the most notable in recent years. The movement has had close links to the EDL and has regularly attended EDL demonstrations, although it seeks to distance itself from the movement (see e.g. Copsey 2011:9).

URL: http://www.marchforengland.weebly.com

Media and activist reports: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-22244933; http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/five-wanted-over-violence-at-nationalist-march-7770883.html

National Front

The National Front has strong historical roots in the UK – both as a political party and as a mobilizer to racist activities like street-marches and hooligan activity (see for instance Dunning et al. 1988). Today it remains in activity in both elections, and in demonstrations, but has experienced a strong decrease in influence and attention on the far-right. Richard Thurlow's book *"Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts to the National Front"* from 1998 provides the reader with a strong understanding of the ideological roots of both the NF and the general far-right scene in the UK.

URL: http://www.national-front.org.uk/

Media and activist reports: http://www.blottr.com/breaking-news/casuals-united-announce-alliance-national-front;
http://www.yourlocalguardian.co.uk/news/topstories/10046841.National_Front_to_contest_Croydon_North_by_election/;

Various local branches: http://swindonnf.blogspot.co.uk/?pos=3&s=10

Nottingham Patriots

Nottingham Patriots is a rather well-built and sophisticated blog emphasizing anti-Islamic ideology, and "alternative news" primarily on crimes that can be attributed to people of migrant origin. It also quite heavily adverts for BNP rallies and points of view, and links strongly to several other websites of the same character – seemingly with the purpose of bringing large parts of the online community together in the same struggle.

URL: http://myblog-angeln.blogspot.no/

Racial Volunteer Force

The RVF is a racist and neo-Nazi organization with a history of violent behavior and links to other similar organization like Combat 18 and the National Front.

URL: http://rvfonline.com/

Media and activist reports: http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/nov/05/race.thefarright;

Various local branches described as contact points:
http://www.rvfonline.com/public_html/mainsite/contact.htm

RedWatch

RedWatch is a blog with the sole purpose of naming and shaming oppositional politicians, activists and others of the British extreme right and neo-Nazi scene. On the blog, pictures,

personal information and addresses to "leftists" are posted, with the highly implicit aim of encouraging others to take action against these individuals.

URL: http://redwatch.org/

Media and activist reports:
http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2006/oct/04/news.g2;
http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/jan/17/politics.thefarright

Scottish Defence League

The SDL was founded in September 2009 as the Scottish sister organisation of the EDL. The Inter-City Firm (ICF) a hooligan group linked to Glasgow Rangers FC was a key actor in the SDL's formation. The SDL has joined the EDL in several demonstrations over the years, and has held many of its own in Scotland. After several conflicts between members of the SDL and the EDL, the SDL joined the breakaway Infidels of Britain coalition on 2 April 2011.

URL: The former websites of the group are today inactive. They are however present on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/borderinfidels

Media and activist reports: http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2013/2/15/berwick-uaf-campaign-gathers-support-ahead-of-scottish-defen.html;
http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2013/2/15/berwick-uaf-campaign-gathers-support-ahead-of-scottish-defen.html;

Stop Islamization of Europe: England

The SIOE England movement is part of the European SIOE-network, which organizes demonstrations and protests across the European continent, and now also has affiliates across the Atlantic. The English division was founded in 2007, and is – as the name implies – highly anti-Islamic oriented. The movement has displayed potential for mobilization through among other things a rather big demonstration in Harrow in 2009 protesting the building of a mosque.

URL: http://sioeengland.wordpress.com/

Media and activist reports: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2123240/Far-right-extremists-Europe-march-Denmark-Islamisation-Europe.html;
http://www.islamophobiatoday.com/tag/stop-the-islamization-of-europe/;
http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/counter-jihad/organisations/Stop-Islamisation-Network

UKIP

Although, clearly by many a highly controversial actor to include in an analysis of the far-right in the UK, UKIP is included due to it being found to be engaged in links with certain actors in the network, but also because several of the websites under study include explicit incitement to vote for UKIP in elections. UKIP itself is highly nationalistically oriented political party, enjoying increasing support across the UK on its anti-EU and migration-sceptic platform.

URL: http://ukip.org/

Media and activist reports: http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/edwest/100143056/ukip-are-not-far-right-theres-nothing-extremist-about-rejecting-the-benefits-of-diversity/; http://labour-uncut.co.uk/2013/03/14/yes-they%E2%80%99re-right-wing-but-ukip-is-not-fascist/;

Welsh Defence League

The WDL is a rather similar organization to that of the SDL. It has enjoyed links with the EDL, but after several incidents of links with neo-Nazis, internal conflicts, and conflicts with EDL leadership, the WDL today seems to be badly broken. A website exists, but this seems to have been inactive for a long period of time.

URL: http://welshdefence.webs.com/

Media and activist reports: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-11916458

4 Freedoms Community

Together with sites like *Gates of Vienna* and *Atlas Shrugs,* 4FC is arguably one of the most prominent and influential anti-Islamic websites today. The primary orientation is spreading anti-Islamic ideology and providing the readers with "alternative news." 4FC is furthermore the creation of Alan Lake – known for his financial support of the EDL in its formative years.

URL: http://4freedoms.com

Media and activist reports: http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/counter-jihad/country/UK#id-118; http://www.dagbladet.no/2012/03/26/nyheter/terrorangrepet/anders_behring_breivik/alan_lake/utenriks/20681908/

Appendix II: Dataset and Computing

The dataset is as noted in the thesis collected, systematized and processed by myself. The computations from Excel spreadsheet into graphical models was made in the social network analysis program yED graph editor.

	EDL	SDL	WDL	Infidels	Brit Res	cas Utd	ATB/C18	Hala Camp	Kafir Crus	Brok Brit	Nott Pat	EvF	RvF	BNP	BF	UKIP	LR	MfE	Brit First	Nat Fr.	4FC	C-Ex-F	Eng Ours	RedWatch	SIOE UK	Engl Dem	JDL	L.o.St.G	Brit PP	England First	A Case for Tr	calling engla	BDP	NA
English Defence League		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Scottish Defence League			0																														
Welsh Defence League				0																													
Infidels of Britain					0																												
British Resistance						0																								1			
Casuals United							0		1																								
Aryan Terror Brigade/C18								0						1																			
Halal Campaign									0																								
Kafir Crusaders		1					1		1	0	1	1				1	1									1	1						
Broken Britain							1			1	0					1										1							
Nottingham Patriots		1										0	1		1						1												
English Volunteer Force					1		1		1				0						1	1		1				1							
Racial Volunteer Force														0																			
British National Party															0																		
British Freedom																0																	
UK Independence Party																	0																
Lawful Rebellion																		0												1	1		
March for England		1					1												0														
Britain First																				0													
National Front																					0												
4 Freedoms Community																						0											
Combined Ex-Forces																							0										
England is Ours																								0									
RedWatch								1																	0				1				
SIOE England																										0							
English Democrats																											0						
Jewish Defence League																						1						0					
League of St. George																				1	1								0				
British People's Party																								1				1	0	1			
England First																														0			
A Case for Treason						1												1													0	1		
Calling England																		1													1	0		
British Democratic Party																																	0
Nationalist Alliance																																	